

# THE LONDON READER

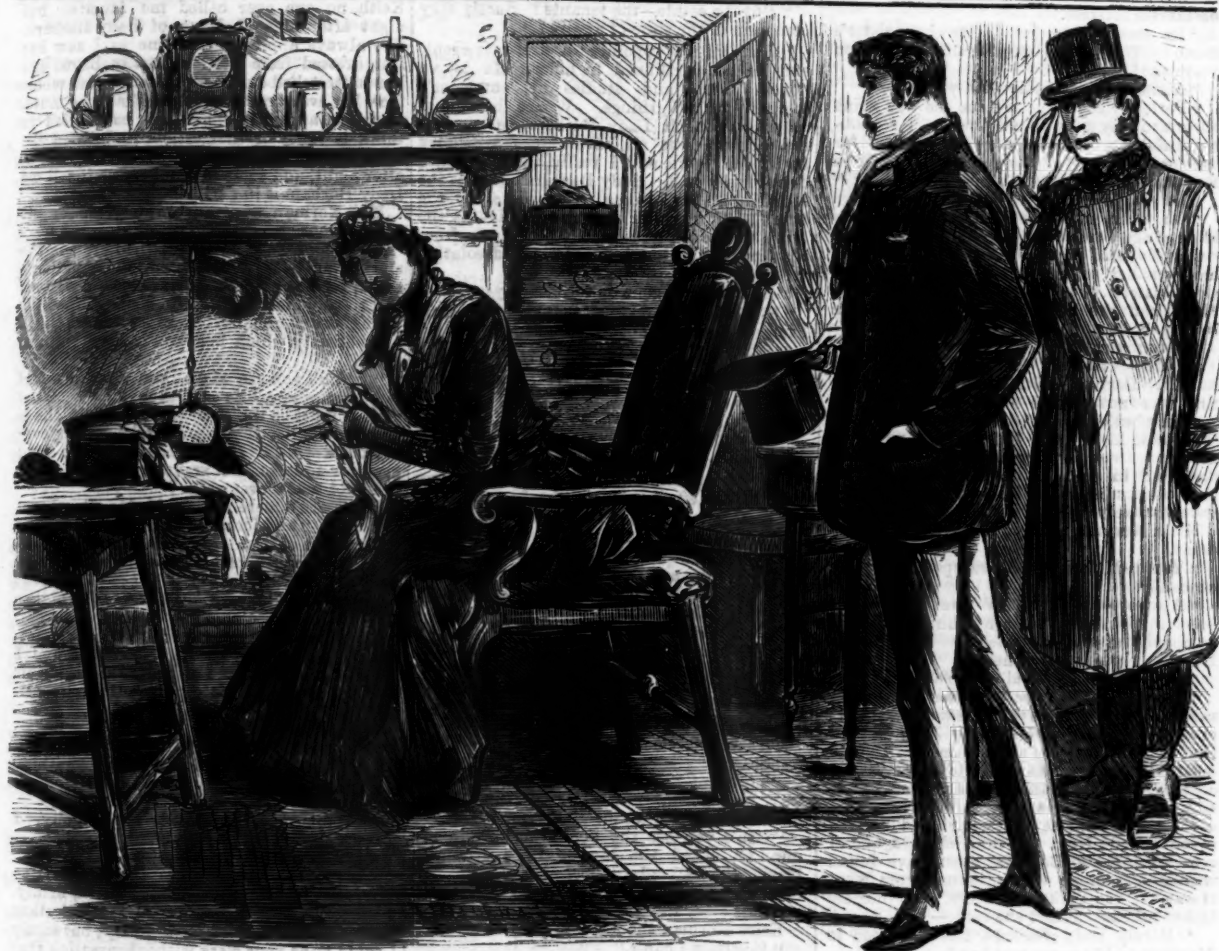
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[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



[MRS. ASHTON WAS SITTING BY THE FIRE, KNITTING, WHEN HER SON USHERED IN HER VISITOR.]

## POOR LADY BARBARA.

### CHAPTER IV.

We left Keith Norman listening to the story of his mother's birthplace, growing more and more perplexed as Mr. Bruce unfolded the mystery which overshadowed the grand old Grange, and the doubt which haunted himself whether, as the life-long friend and adviser of the Keith family, he was not bound to take some decided step in the matter.

The last Earl of Munro, Keith's grandfather, had had three daughters and one son, and the latter from his boyhood was an utter scapegrace, and as he went from bad to worse, it surprised no one very much when his father, scandalised by some more than usually disgraceful act of dissipation, insisted on Viscount Keith's joining him in cutting off the entail.

This was the business which took John Norman to Studley Grange, and ended in his carrying off the youngest daughter of the house. The Earl was furious, and instead of

taking Kenneth Bruce's advice, and entailing his estate afresh on his eldest daughter and her descendants, enraged at finding even one of his girls had deceived him, he resolved to keep all power absolutely in his own hands.

Lord Keith died a year before his father, who then made a will bequeathing Studley Grange and its revenues to his eldest daughter, Lady Mona, with reversion to her sister, Barbara; the erring Diana was not even mentioned.

Thus far all was plain and smooth sailing. Lady Mona, a strong-minded, clear-headed woman, was a client after Kenneth's own heart. He had a real friendship for her, and felt an honest regret that she only lived to enjoy her honours three months.

Eleven years had now passed since Lady Barbara Keith had become mistress of Studley, and in them strange things had happened. Every neighbour for miles round had had—literally, not figuratively—the doors of the Grange shut in their faces. The lovely grounds had been neglected, till they were now a perfect wilderness.

The whole establishment of servants had

been dismissed, and Lady Barbara and her companion lived alone, waited on by one maid whose husband acted as odd man—these two forming the sole retainers of the grand old place, where thirty domestics had once gathered in the servants' hall.

Effort after effort had been made to break through the seclusion of Lady Barbara. The vicar and the doctor, tried friends of the Munro family, had persisted in calling at the Grange long after others had given up the attempt to see Lady Barbara in despair; but these two were never rewarded by a glimpse of the mistress of the house. The same message was invariably returned, "Lady Barbara did not receive visitors."

Now and again the companion, Mrs. Lenard, a pretty and very attractive widow, would drive through the village to the neighbouring town, make a few purchases and return; but, for the most part, the Grange was supplied by London tradespeople, who sent the goods by train to Studley station, whence the surly old man fetched them with a horse and cart.

It was the strangest story ever known. At

the time her seclusion began the Lady Barbara could not have been much over thirty-five. She was a woman of extreme beauty, and, so far as Mr. Bruce knew, had never had a lover, and never—save the death in her family—known a sorrow. What earthly object could she have had in thus withdrawing herself from the world, and living a life as secluded as that of any cloistered nun?

"When did you see her last?" asked Keith, who had listened to the story with breathless interest.

"In seventy-two, just after her sister's death! Why, bless me, it must be eleven years ago!"

"And she was friendly with you?"

"Perfectly so! She told me she was going abroad to stay with an old friend. I remember thinking she was sure to marry, for besides being one of the richest heiresses in England, she was a very beautiful woman."

"But she must have been quite old?"

"Oh, dear, no!" said the lawyer, whose ideas of age were very different from Keith's.

"Only five and thirty; there was just one year between her and your mother. The two elder sisters were a great contrast. Lady Mona had the brains, Lady Barbara the beauty."

"And my mother?"

"I always thought she trusted them more in herself. Barbara Keith was a noted beauty. She was not in the least clever, had no taste for business, but she was not deficient. She would have made an excellent wife and mother; was a charming hostess, and delighted in society. In fact, she was the last woman in the world one would have thought likely to shut herself up like this."

Keith Norman gently recalled him to the point.

"You said Lady Barbara spoke of going abroad?"

"Ay, to stay with the FitzTemples. I know the family well. Sir John FitzTemple is one of my oldest clients. Well, Lady Barbara never reached them!"

"Do you mean she did not go abroad?"

"I can't say! It was November when I saw her. She told me then she was starting at once. The following March Sir John brought his family to town for the season, and I dined with them, by invitation, in Mayfair. In the course of conversation Lady FitzTemple said she had spent a most delightful winter at Mentone, and her little girl had derived much benefit from the mild climate, and I remarked Lady Barbara must have found winter at Mentone very different from what it was on her Yorkshire moors. My hostess looked amazed, at last she said—

"Surely Lady Barbara has not been to Mentone! We never met her."

"Of course I told her Lady Barbara's statement that she was going to stay with them."

"Sir John looked absolutely startled."

"As a fact, Bruce," he said, "we have heard nothing of Barbara Keith since her sister's death. She did not even trouble herself to answer my wife's letter of condolence."

"But where can she be?" I asked, quickly.

"At home," returned Lady FitzTemple. "I had a letter from my uncle, the Viscount Studley, last week, and he said Lady Barbara had been at the Grange about a month."

"Go on, my dear," said her husband. "I hate gossip as much as you do, but Bruce is Lady Barbara's adviser, and so you had better tell him all you can."

"My uncle says all the servants have been dismissed," continued Lady FitzTemple, "and that Lady Barbara, her companion, one maid, and her husband are alone at the Grange."

Mr. Bruce stopped then, and, shrewd old lawyer though he was, looked anxiously at Keith, as though to see what impression had been made on him, but Mr. Norman only smiled, very gravely.

"Didn't you go down to Studley?"

"The next day, and was refused admission."

I did not even see the companion. A note was brought me in Lady Barbara's own handwriting, saying she would prefer all business to be transacted by letter. I suppose I was an old fool, but I went back to London in a huff."

"And since?"

"I have paid over Lady Barbara's income half-yearly in cheques to her account at the Studley Bank. I have received written acknowledgments; that's all."

"But the estate—the tenants? Surely they complain of the state of affairs?"

"Lady Mona appointed a first-rate agent, and he has continued in office. He is an honest man, and studies his employer's interest in all things. Where he would naturally consult Lady Barbara he consults me. Between us we have managed Studley for eleven years, and I really think we have done it very well. Lady Barbara's task is the spending of the income, or, as some say, the hoarding of it. Her authority begins at the lodge of the Grange, and they tell me from that point nothing but ruin and desolation meets the eye."

"And she has gone on for eleven years?"

"Eleven years, and in all that time your aunt has never been seen outside the lodge gates!"

"Doesn't she go to church?"

"Never."

"And no one is allowed to enter the house?"

"No one. Mr. Martin—Lady FitzTemple's uncle—the vicar, was staying with his family last June, and he assured me the Grange was a heavy anxiety to him. He had tried again and again to effect an entrance in vain."

"Couldn't you insist upon seeing Lady Barbara, Mr. Bruce?"

"I fear not. An Englishman's home is his castle, Keith, and no unwelcome guest can effect an entry. I fancy that applies equally to an English woman."

"She must be mad!"

"There has never been a case of insanity in the family; and the Studley doctor, who has known her from her birth, told me he never met a woman less likely to go out of her mind. I asked him just for my own satisfaction."

"Then it seems to me," said Keith, philosophically, "you can do nothing, Mr. Bruce; and my Aunt Barbara must just have her own way, and go on shutting herself up. It's a harmless fancy, after all."

"Can't you see the doubt working in my mind?" asked the lawyer in a strangely troubled tone. "Is it possible, Keith, you can't guess what haunts me—why I have told you this story?"

Keith Norman shook his head.

"I confess I can't."

"Remember, I knew Barbara Keith fairly well from childhood to the age of thirty-five. Remember, I saw her two or three times a year all this time, and I recollect her as the most cheerful, light-hearted girl, the most sociable and agreeable woman I ever met."

"Yes."

"Only a great trouble would, to my thinking, make her the voluntary recluse she appears; and I know of a certainty no trouble has touched her since her sister's death, and she could not have felt Lady Mona's loss much, for they were never warmly attached."

"Well?"

"Can't you see it?" pleaded Kenneth Bruce, the drops of perspiration standing on his forehead like great beads, so strong and real was his feeling on the matter. "Keith, will you force me to put my awful suspicion into words?"

It dawned on Keith then suddenly as a flash of lightning, and he felt how hard his cool, matter-of-fact questions must have seemed. "I see it all. You think Aunt Barbara does not shut herself up, but that her seclusion is an unwilling one?"

"I say nothing, Keith; nothing at all. Only over and over again in history we meet cases where two people live alone together until the

stronger nature completely masters the weaker one, and—"

"I understand now," said Keith, slowly.

"You see," went on the lawyer, quickly, as though he longed to have the confession over, "Lady Barbara is more to me than an ordinary client. She is my old friend's daughter. I knew her as a child, and I can't help feeling but for my pride I might have done more for her if I had only persisted in trying to see her eleven years ago. I am not an imaginative man, Keith, no one ever called me fanciful; but night after night I dream of Lady Barbara. She always appears before me as I saw her last, dressed from head to foot in black, her hands stretched out in supplication, her whole face, her every gesture making the same mute, wordless appeal for help. I have tried to think it fancy or indigestion," admitted the lawyer, frankly, "but it comes again night after night, and some instinct seems to tell me Lady Barbara is in peril!"

Mr. Norman was much impressed by his client's emotion.

He would have felt a deep interest in the story even had it not related to his mother's sister, for Kenneth Bruce was so self-possessed and sternly matter-of-fact in general, that his young companion felt it must indeed be a great anxiety which had power to move him thus.

"I think you are right, and there is foul play somewhere," he said, thoughtfully; "but it is to me the companion, and if she is bent on cruelty why does she take so long over her black work? If she had wanted to read my poor aunt to her grave surely she could not have taken eleven years?"

"You are a mere boy," said Mr. Bruce, reprovingly, "and jump to conclusions at once. I never spoke of murder. Mrs. Edmund would have no earthly object in murdering Lady Barbara's death—unless a will had been already made in her own favour. What I think is that the widow has isolated her unfortunate employer from every former friend and acquaintance so as to bring about this result, and I fear—here he lowered his voice—"if even this does not suffice, she is capable of 'using positive cruelty.'"

Keith's eyes flashed.

"She would never!"

"A desperate woman would do anything to secure such a fortune as it is in Lady Barbara's power to bequeath."

"It must be prevented—the cruelty, I mean."

"But how?"

"We must go at once to Studley Grange and insist on admittance," said Keith, firmly.

"I suppose people would call me a fortune hunter if I proclaimed my identity; but surely I could go as your clerk without revealing that I am Lady Barbara's nearest living relation."

"I think you are right, my boy. One of us must go. To-morrow we will talk over the matter again, and decide the details."

But they were interrupted by the postman's knock as he went his rounds with the last delivery.

The servant brought in a single letter, which he handed to Keith.

"May I open it?" the latter asked his chief, with a smile. "It is my little sister's writing, and she has marked it immediate. Poor little thing, I wonder if she fancied I should get it five minutes the sooner?"

But Katy's letter was more important than he imagined. An ominous orange-coloured envelope was enclosed, and on a slip of paper was this brief note in girlish characters—

"MY DEAREST KEITH, I am so glad to hear from you."

"This came yesterday, and mamma wanted to put it in the fire; but I was determined you should get it. I hope it won't be too late. I will send it the first moment I can get to the post."

"Your loving sister,"

"KATY."

"A telegram," said Bruce, slowly, and with



a touch of gravity, as he saw the enclosure, "and sent to Oakdale. Why, Keith, I should have thought in four months any one would have known you had left Barton."

Keith tore open the telegram breathlessly, and then handed it silently to his companion. At any time such a message would have impressed him; but, coming as it did just after Mr. Bruce's story, its effect was very strong, and when he had read the summons the elder man was equally moved.

"Mary Ashton, Studley, to Keith Norman, Barton."

"If you have any pity, go to Studley Grange, and insist on seeing the mistress. Tell them that try to stop you who you are. Keep this secret."

"I must go at once," cried Keith, starting to his feet, "evidently there is something wrong."

"I'll drive you to the station, and you'll just catch the night express to York. It's a tedious journey afterwards, but you will reach Studley early in the morning, which, perhaps, is for the best."

"Who is Mary Ashton?"

"She was your mother's nurse, and until Lady Mona's death her confidential maid. She has a pretty cottage, and a comfortable annuity from the Earl, so, fortunately, she was quite independent of Lady Barbara. Strange that I should have forgotten Mary Ashton all these years. Perhaps if I had written to her she might have found out something for me."

"How did she know my address?"

"I recollect now I wrote it down for her when I saw her at Lady Mona's funeral. Poor thing, she just worshipped your mother, and after the funeral she came to me with tears in her eyes, and asked if 'Lady Diana's boy' wasn't his Aunt Barbara's heir. Of course I told her—what I believed—then—that Lady Barbara would probably marry and have half a dozen boys of her own; but nothing would content her but my putting down your name and address on a piece of paper."

"And she has kept it all these years?"

"She is just the kind of woman to do it, a regular old family servant of the type fast dying out. Keith, I wish I could go with you, but it is impossible for us both to leave the office. I hope you will be careful."

"Of what?"

"I don't know. I seem to see hidden perils in your path, and I don't want to lose you."

"Then you think this telegram means more than meets the eye?"

"I think it means danger. If there has been foul play going on all these years, Mrs. Lenard is hardly likely to stay her hand and be honest now."

"I wish you could tell me something about her. Who introduced her to my aunt?"

"I have not the least idea."

"But you must have heard something of her. She couldn't drop suddenly from the clouds."

"I don't suppose she did; but I never heard of any one who knew her before she came to Studley as your aunt's companion."

"You have never seen her, I suppose?"

"The lawyer shook his head."

"Never; but Mr. Martin, the vicar, has enjoyed that pleasure several times."

"What does he think of her?"

"He is an idiot, my dear boy, an absolute idiot."

Keith smiled.

"But even an idiot might express an opinion of Mrs. Lenard."

"Well, then he actually thinks her a sweet, suffering saint, and deprecates the hard fate which forces her to be at the beck and call of a fastidious, freiful old maid!"

Keith smiled.

"I see, I must not count on him?"

"Unless he has changed, he sees everything with Mrs. Lenard's eyes. Lady Fitz Temple, indeed, insinuates he invited the fair widow to migrate to the vicarage as Mrs. Martin, but I can't quite believe that!"

"Is he rich?"

"Well, it's a good living, and he has private means. Then he's a careful man, and has saved something, no doubt."

Mr. Norman's face fell.

"Then depend upon it, sir, there is foul play at Studley; unless she had very much to gain by remaining at the Grange, Mrs. Lenard would not have let such a chance slip of establishing herself as the vicar's offer."

It was a very long drive to King's Cross, and somehow conversation did not flourish.

"Trust no one—that's my best advice to you, Keith," was Kenneth Bruce's parting caution, "and whatever happens, post your letters with your own hands, and have all that come for you left at the office for you to fetch yourself." Then as the train was moving he added a last warning, "Don't fall in love with the widow, Keith!"

"That's not likely," thought the young man to himself, as he journeyed northwards. "I may have done as many foolish things in my life as most people, but certainly I never fell in love, and as I told Lord Landale when he advised me to find a wife—I don't believe I ever shall."

Lord Landale had not forgotten the young lawyer, whom his hand had certainly guided to his present comfortable position. The Earl had spent barely a week at the Park, but he had paid two or three visits to London since Keith settled there, and on each Mr. Norman had been invited to dine with him at his hotel.

Lady Joan was always present. She welcomed the young lawyer with the frankness of a child, seemed the embodiment of health and happiness, and looked altogether so fresh and blooming that Keith often thought her father's fears for her were only a fancy, born of his anxious love.

He had never broken his pledge of secrecy. No hint of his had alluded to the peer's warning, and when Mr. Bruce alluded to Lord Landale's interest in him he never said that interest would have not been continued but for his promise to guard his heart against Lady Joan.

Mr. Bruce rarely spoke of the Landales, but one night when Keith had accompanied them to the opera, he did say in rather a warning tone,—

"Aren't you playing with edged tools?"

Keith was too proud to pretend to misunderstand him.

"Don't be afraid, sir," he said, a little bitterly; "my father abused your confidence once by falling in love with your client's daughter, but I shall not repeat the offence."

"I don't think you are capable of persuading any girl to elope with you," said the lawyer, kindly, "but Lady Joan is very beautiful. You might, without any breach of faith to me, learn to love her, and I know it would be in vain. Lord Landale would never consent."

"I shall never ask him. I admire Lady Joan, but I shall never do more. Mr. Bruce, I think I am too proud to lose my heart to a woman richer than I am myself."

"I'm glad of it—don't take offence, Keith; it was for your own sake I spoke. I would rather see you in your grave than know Joan Disney was your wife!"

Strong language. If Keith had not been so busy and so absolutely heart whole, he might have wondered why the only two men who interested themselves in his future were both so anxious he should not lose his heart to Lady Joan. As it was, he rarely thought of the subject, though to-night Mr. Bruce's warnings to escape the fascinations of the widow did bring it back to his mind.

Keith had seen so little of feminine society—since Mrs. Norman had always contrived to make her step-son feel a stranger in her drawing-room—that absolutely the few times he had met Lady Joan represented the greater part of his intercourse with the opposite sex.

Mr. Bruce had no bright-faced girlish nieces or pretty youthful cousins to light up the old

house at Fulham with occasional visits. The busy professional men who came to dine with him, would as soon have thought of transporting their drawing-room to the old bachelor's as their daughters to such an intensely masculine abode, so that when Keith Norman congratulated himself on never falling in love, he might have added that even had he wished to do so he had never had the chance.

The journey after he reached York was quite as tedious as Mr. Bruce had foretold; but finding he had five hours to wait at the northern metropolis, Keith wisely spent most of them in bed, and refreshed his inner man with an excellent breakfast before resuming his travels.

He had to change trains twice after leaving York, and it was past ten o'clock when he found himself at Helsfield, whence—a porter assured him—a train would start in about half-an-hour for Studley.

There was only one other passenger awaiting it, and Keith found himself watching her with plying eye, so utterly unsuitable was her thin, threadbare jacket to the bitter cold of the morning air.

It was the end of October, but here in Yorkshire the wind was as keen and sharp as might have been expected in January. Indeed, even in London winter seemed to have begun; it was an unusually early season, and the trees in the Fulham gardens were nearly bare.

Keith's fellow traveller was small and slight, little more than a child, and her pale, thin face had a sad, mournful expression, which went to the young man's heart. He wondered what she was doing at Hilsion, and how it came about that her friends let her travel alone, for, despite her shabby clothes, he felt she was a lady.

The girl shivered in the cold north wind, and Keith taking a seat beside her on the bench proffered a share of his travelling rug; she accepted it simply, yet with a look of surprise, which made him think very little kindness had fallen to the lot of the lonely child.

"It will be another twenty minutes before the train starts," observed Mr. Norman; "really they might provide a waiting-room; this platform is the draughtiest hole I ever was in."

"I suppose there are so few people who have to start from this station," apologized the girl, "the train only goes to Studley and Netherton."

"Are you going to Studley?"

He felt half ashamed of the curiosity betrayed on his question, but he was interested in the poor little lonely maiden, and wanted to draw her out. He was disappointed, however, for she only answered briefly,—

"Yes."

"So am I. I never was in Yorkshire before. It seems a beautiful country; is Studley a pretty place?"

"I don't know," then perhaps she feared her answer might sound ungracious, for she added quietly, "I am like you, I never was in Yorkshire before."

"And have you come for a long stay?" The tears welled up into her dark eyes.

"I cannot tell. My mother died only a month ago, and it was her last wish that I should come to Studley and ask to see the Lady Barbara Keith. I have been ill, and so I could not come before."

It seemed to Keith Norman the strangest coincidence ever known; he forgot his chief's warning to trust no one, and was ready to place perfect confidence in this dark-eyed girl, who had so early tasted life's sorrows.

"I too am going to see Lady Barbara. Can you tell me anything about her? I have reason to believe she is an invalid."

The girl shook her head.

"I never heard even her name until my mother was dying; then she told me the little income we had had which kept us from want, had come to her from Lady Barbara Keith. Mother said she was very good and kind, and that though she could never see her, yet she would be sure to love me and give me a home,

I have come to Studley because I promised my mother, but I don't think I shall like Lady Barbara." Here the girl fixed her beautiful eyes on Keith with a piteous intensity. "However kind she may be to me, I shall never be able to forget she left my mother to die in poverty."

"Was she ill long?" asked Keith, gently.

"She was never well, she seemed just fading away. The doctor said change of air and some of the comforts that money buys would have saved her, or at least prolonged her life, but you see we were poor. They say the Lady Barbara is very rich. How can I love her or respect her when she let my mother die just for want of money?"

"Perhaps she did not know."

"Mother told me her name about a month before—the end, and I wrote to her. I never asked any one for anything before, but it was for mother, so I did not mind. No answer ever came—only the five shillings every Monday—not a single word. Mother said I was not to be angry with Lady Barbara, but I can't help it when I think of that. She might have sent a line just to say she was sorry for us."

Keith took the child's hand pityingly in his.

"Will you try to trust me? I have a sister just as young as you are. Will you try to look on me as a friend if—the Lady Barbara disappoints you?"

"Do you think she will?"

"I don't know, I can't tell. Just promise me to trust me, for I fear, child, you will meet with but a sorry welcome at the Grange."

"I can't help trusting you—you are so kind."

"I will try to be," said Keith, simply. "I promise you one thing: whatever happens at the Grange, I will be your friend."

He little thought then of all that was to come of the promise; but the girl believed him, and put her little hand confidently in his.

"Won't you tell me your name?" he asked her.

"Mine is Keith Norman."

"I am Blanche, and my mother's name was Browne."

If he had hoped her name would throw any light on her connection with Lady Barbara he was doomed to disappointment, for what could be more hopelessly prosaic and commonplace than the homely cognomen of Browne?

"What are you going to do when you get to Studley?" asked Keith, thoroughly surprised and curious about the girl's mission. "Do you know that Lady Barbara lives in complete seclusion? She never leaves the house and sees no visitors!"

"I think she will see me," and Blanche fumbled in her little reticule for something wrapped with great care in cotton wool.

"Mother said if I showed her this she would understand. It was given to my mother long ago, and she could never bear to part with it, however poor we were."

This was a quaint old-fashioned ring of little actual value, made of hair of three different shades, and mounted on a thick gold band. Inside three names were engraved—Mona, Barbara, and Diana.

Keith felt convinced the ring had been a joint present from the three sisters, but to whom?—and how, after the lapse of time (his mother had been dead eight-and-twenty years) had it passed into the possession of Mrs. Browne?

"I think we had better go together to the Grange," said Keith, reflectively. "I feel sure we shall have great difficulty in gaining admittance; but we shall stand a better chance of it if we go together."

Blanche thanked him eagerly.

"I feel so frightened!"

"I daresay you do. You are such a child. It is hard for you to have to make your way alone among strangers."

"I am not a child," corrected Blanche, simply. "People think so sometimes, because I am so small, but I shall be eighteen in May!"

"Eighteen! I should have guessed you quite four years less. Have you no other friends? Supposing Lady Barbara refuses you a home?"

"Yes," she said, quietly, "I know the forewoman of a large shop in Oxford-street, and she said she could get me a situation there to do church embroidery, and then there is a kind old doctor, who attended mother, he said he could find some little children for me to teach. I should like that better than the shop, and better than being with Lady Barbara, only, you see, I had to come because I promised mother."

"And have you no idea what tie there was between your mother and Lady Barbara?"

"No; I know mother went to Studley once, and she told me it nearly broke her heart; she was so sweet and good, my dear, dear mother. I think, Mr. Norman, Lady Barbara must be a cruel, wicked woman if she could say anything to hurt her."

When the two strangely-assorted companions reached Studley, Mr. Norman inquired of a porter the whereabouts of the Grange.

"Better nor three miles, sir!"

"I suppose I can have a fly to take us there?"

"I'll fetch you a fly right enough, sir, but you'll never get to the Grange; not a creature passes the lodge gates now."

This was even worse than Keith had expected; but he persisted in his desire for a conveyance, and when it came he handed Blanche in as respectfully as though she had been a duchess.

"This gentleman wants you to drive him to the Grange, Ashton," said the porter to the driver, with a broad grin. "I reckon you'll have to bring him back again as well."

Keith caught at the name, and as soon as they were clear of the station, stopped the fly, and asked the driver if he knew Mary Ashton, once in service at the Grange.

"I rather think so, sir," said the man, civilly, "seeing I'm her son. My mother's a wonderful woman, sir. I'm blest if she didn't dream three nights ago that a strange gentleman came and asked me to drive him to the Grange. She will be surprised if she's standing at her door to see us go by, and find her dream's come true."

Mr. Norman did not believe Mrs. Ashton's surprise would be genuine, and he strongly doubted the fact of the dream, but he was not going to betray the old nurse's secret to her son, so he only said, carelessly,—

"I should like to have a talk with your mother, Ashton. I fancy she knows a great friend of mine in London—Mr. Bruce."

"Lawyer Bruce," and Ashton nodded his head emphatically. "She does. He used to be about here a lot at one time. I mind the last time he was down I drove him to the Grange myself; and he got about as warm a welcome as is waiting for you and Missie now. Anyhow, if you're a friend of lawyer Bruce mother will be main glad to see you. She lived at the Grange for more than thirty years, and she sets store by the old family still. I'll pull up at the cottage if you'd like a word with the old lady, sir."

Mrs. Ashton was sitting by the fire knitting, in company with a favourite cat, when her son ushered in her visitor. She promptly dismissed John from the interview by saying it made her scared to see his horse left standing driverless. He'd better take the young lady for a turn on the Netherton road, and come back for the gentleman in ten minutes, then they'd have had their say. Evidently maternal authority was powerful in Studley, for the great hulking coachman obeyed as meekly as a child.

Left alone, the old woman took Keith's hand in her two withered ones.

"You've your mother's face," she said, gravely, "and Lady Diana aye loved the helpless. You'll not things right now, though you've been over long in coming."

Keith explained the delay of the telegram, and begged her to tell him what was wrong.

"I can't."

"But you must know something?"

The old woman shook her head.

"I feel it here," and she put one hand on her heart. "A something here tells me there's a cruel wrong going on at the Grange, and that woman with her smooth face and mocking ways is at the bottom of it. There's a mystery and a wrong, and your aunt's in a cruel strait. I'm as sure of all this as I am that my name's Mary Ashton; but give you proof I can't."

"I want no proofs, only tell me what you suspect, and what I can do."

"I suspect that widdy." Mrs. Ashton pronounced the word with a sniff, as though it were a term of great disgrace, quite forgetting it applied equally to herself. "That widdy with her deceitful ways won't stop at naught. She says Lady Barbara's ill, but I know my lady has had no doctor. I'ma thinking myself the poor dear's been got to make her will, as that scorpion wanted, and now having done all that was asked by her, she's being gently helped out of the world."

Keith shuddered; it was a horrible idea to contemplate, but he could not reprove Mrs. Ashton for thinking such a thing possible, since she seemed to him quite likely to be correct.

"As to what you're to do," said the old woman, almost scornfully, "that's for you to find out. I did my part in sending for Lady Diana's boy, I can't do more."

"I suppose you have seen Mrs. Lenard?"

"Often than I want to. Ay! but she's a clever one; if you're not careful she'll twirl you round her little finger."

The sound of wheels proclaimed the return of John and his fly. As Keith shook hands with the old woman, she, like Mr. Bruce, added a parting warning.

"And mind you don't let her steal your heart, for she can trick herself out like a girl; and as for that Jink's, she's a witch!"

Jink's must be the sole female retainer of the strange household, Keith thought, as they drove off. Another turn of the road and they were at the Lodge gates. The desolation alluded to by Mr. Bruce was fairly upon them. The village was in first-rate order, the cottages in good repair. Evidently Meeking, the agent, was an energetic man, as well as an honest one; but from the lodge gates nothing but ruin faced the travellers.

A well-dressed, superior-looking man came up as Keith and his companion alighted from the fly, and introduced himself to the young man as Lady Barbara's agent.

(To be continued.)

A BUDGET OF GOOD PUNS.—When one hears a really good pun, the word twists which pass for such become more odious than ever. "Is it true that the first apple was eaten by the pair?" is far-fetched; but one cannot deny the humour of it. Again, in the conundrum, "Why is blindman's buff like sympathy?" "Because it is a fellow feeling for a fellow-creature," there is a direct application which is also unquestionably humorous. Then, as another example of a pun which is absurdly apparent, there was Douglas Jerrold's remark about a man to whom he had repeatedly written, in vain, for some money. "I have written him," said Jerrold to an acquaintance, "but got nothing." "Strange," said the other, "for he is a man full of kindness." "Yes," rejoined Jerrold, "un-remitting kindness." In the reign of James I. of England, punning was quite a serious matter. The following is a specimen of a sermon from the pulpit, and is enough to show the character of the times. It is a string of puns: "The dial shows that we must all die; yet nevertheless, all houses are turned into ale-houses; our cares into oates; our paradise is a pair o' dice; our marriage a merry age; our matrimony a matter o'money; our divines have become dry vines. It was not so in the days of Noah, Ah-no!"



## WHEN SHALL WE TWO MEET AGAIN?

—O—

### CHAPTER IV.

#### A FRIEND IN NEED.

THERE was a deep silence, during which the only sound to be heard was a quick drawn breath, and then Colonel Gordon, recovering himself with an effort, laid his hand on Trevanion's shoulder.

"You are telling me nonsense. You can't have killed him. Why, you wouldn't hurt a fly if you could help it."

"He's lying dead in front of his own windows. He hit me first, and I was mad at the time," with a look of despair in the good-looking young face which was so alien to its usual expression that it went to the Colonel's heart.

"There's no time to lose," he said. "Come with me, and I'll get you out of the scrape if I can. It was a stand-up fight, I take it?"

"But I was years younger. I hadn't an idea how old he was till I saw him on the ground," said Trevanion, in wild regret.

"And then you made the poor fellow out years older than he was, I'd bet. It's a bad job—an awful job; but come along," linking his arm in Trevanion's. "I'm working a plan out in my head, but the first thing to do is to get you under cover."

"You are awfully good," said Ralph, unsteadily, "but she begged me to save myself, or I never should have thought of it, and I was trying to catch a train."

"To be caught by a detective as soon as you set foot in Paddington or Victoria. I know a better way than that."

The Colonel dragged him on, almost against his will, through a shrubbery where the darkness was impenetrable, along a garden path bordered on each side by a low grey wall covered with ivy.

Gradually the path ascended, and went round and round a little hill, at the top of which was a curious shaped hut called "The Hermitage," completely hidden by the ivy-covered walls, which encircled it in a close embrace.

The windows were arched like those of a church, and the door might have been the portal to a chapel.

Colonel Gordon took a key out of his pocket and opened the door, motioned to Trevanion to step in, then he looked it securely on the inside.

It was a good-sized room in a circular form, the roof rising to a point in the centre, supported by converging beams of dark oak. The chairs and tables were all of the same wood in rustic form.

Over the mantelpiece there was a stag's head with branching antlers, with various pipes, queer shaped knives, and guns and pistols of different makes and designs.

Over all hung the fragrance of delicate tobacco, which was accounted for as Colonel Gordon remarked,—

"I often use this as my smoking den."

Ralph dropped down on a chair, and gave an impatient groan, as if already rebelling against the grief and horror that oppressed him. Could it be only that afternoon that he landed at Southampton, so content with his own prospects that he would not have changed places with any other man in the world? It seemed ten years ago at least.

Colonel Gordon, his brows knitted together in deep thought, took a decanter, a bottle of water, and some glasses out of a cupboard, and set them on the table. He filled a glass with some whiskey and water and pushed it across to Trevanion.

"Drink that, my boy, and then get on with your story."

Ralph caught it up and drank it at a draught, for his throat felt rough as a ploughed field. Then he rested his elbows on the table, his

chin on his hands, and told his miserable story in a few words. Afterwards there was a long pause.

"Did you meet anyone on the way?" the Colonel asked, after pondering deeply, "any gardener or groom?"

"Not a soul. I came the back way through the wood just as I used to come," Trevanion said, with a sigh, "and as a fact, nobody knew I was there except Cyrilla herself and her husband. I never heard his name."

"Sir Thomas Dacre, her cousin. The match was made up by the father. The poor girl never cared a straw for him. But to business," checking himself abruptly as he saw the look that crossed Ralph's face. "Anyone at the station?"

"No one but the porter, in whose charge I left my traps. I told him that they would be sent for, taking it for granted, you know, that I should stay at Mountsorrel," with a quiver on his lip.

"Your name on them in full?"

"Only initials, R.T."

"That's a wonderful luck," breathing more freely. "Now it seems to me," leaning his arms on the table, and looking earnestly at the other man's haggard face, "there is but one course open to you. If Dacre is really dead, the police will take the matter up and scour the country vaguely for the man who assaulted him. No one will know your name except Lady Dacre, and she would be the last person to mention it. Do you follow me?"

"Yes; go on."

"Therefore you could stay on here under your own name, and nobody would be a bit the wiser."

"I would die first!" exclaimed Ralph, with a frown.

"I'm only saying what you *could* do," said Colonel Gordon, soothingly. "That's one side of the question. Now, let us suppose that Sir Thomas is not dead, only shockingly hurt (Trevanion shook his head gloomily), you would be worse off than you were before, in one sense."

"Worse? When I could hold my head up and not feel"—with a shudder—"this awful stain upon my hands?"

"I said in one sense. You would have made an implacable enemy who would run you to death without one grain of pity."

"He couldn't hang me."

"Ah! but there's penal servitude for a murderous assault, and I know the man. He wouldn't stick at a trifle when it was a question of revenge. He would live, if he could possibly manage it, in order to tell your name to the police and get you into the hands of justice. Was there enough light for him to know the colour of your hair and the cut of your features?"

Ralph roused himself with an effort.

"I should say so. I could see that his moustache was grizzled, and that he had a beak-like nose, and I should know him again anywhere."

"Perhaps your face was in the shadow?"

"I dare say," wearily; "I know the moon shone on his as he faced me."

"Then it can't have shone upon yours. Besides, Dacre's eyesight is not as good as it might be, so that it's ten to one if he met you in the street he wouldn't know you again."

"He won't meet me," with a heavy sigh.

"I can't believe that he's dead," shaking his head; "the man's made of cast iron. If his head came in contact with a flower-pot it would be worse for the flower-pot than for his skull. Now, look here, Trevanion, pull yourself together, and listen to me," leaning his arms on the table, and fixing his eyes on Ralph's, which seemed to be gazing into the distance.

Ralph roused himself, and leaning his tired head on his sun-burnt hand, tried hard to collect his thoughts. Do what he would, he could only see that long, still form lying across the gravel-path, with the stern face turned to the skies, and Cyrilla, the widowed wife, sobbing her heart out, as if crushed by the weight

of a sudden despair. Would it haunt him for ever and ever? he asked himself, dully.

"Listen to me," said Colonel Gordon, irritably, for it was characteristic of him to throw himself heart and soul into any business he had in hand, and it annoyed him intensely if anybody would not do the same. "The first thing to-morrow I tell my servants to prepare a room for my friend, Mr. Ronald Treherne. You follow me?"

Ralph nodded.

"Then I drive round by Mountsorrel to hear what has happened," rubbing his beard, "go down to the station, and pick up your traps; you will meet me near the Willow Bridge, and I shall bring you home as if you had just arrived."

Ralph started to his feet.

"You want me to stay here? I can't—I can't! It would drive me wild."

"Not half so wild as being penned up in a cell six feet square," said the Colonel, slowly. "If the pursuit is hot, every terminus as well as every sea-port will be watched. But they won't think of searching here. Believe me, my boy, it is best!"

There was a long pause. Ralph went up to the mantelpiece, and turned his back on his friend, placed his elbows on the shelf, and buried his face in his hands.

It would be torture to him to be here, of all places in the world, where every bush and every flower, every grassy glade, or shady nook would remind him of the love that it was madness to remember. He would rather be frozen and half-starved in the desolate wilds of Greenland; he would rather be broiled to death in the shadeless deserts of central Africa; he would prefer to live or die in any other spot in the whole habitable globe, than to stay here, where the memory of a happier time would always dog his footsteps as a ghost at his elbow; where the girl whom he had loved with his whole heart and soul, would be close to him always—night and day—and yet separated by a gulf as broad and deep as the Atlantic.

Why shouldn't he be the worst, and face his punishment like a man? he asked himself, fiercely, and then he remembered that he would not suffer alone.

Her name would be dragged before the public—and scandal would weave a thousand poisonous stories round her golden head, and she who had always carried herself with such proud, though gentle, grace would be bowed down with shame and sorrow. Never! never!

He clenched his hand till the nails dug into the palm. Rather than that should happen he would hide like a rabbit in some underground hole, and never look upon the face of his fellowman again.

There was one way out of the difficulty which flashed through his mind with all the strength of an almost resistless temptation. He might steal out in the darkness, and make his way through the silence of the woods to a quiet pool he knew of, which was deep as his own despair. One plunge—a few ripples on the surface—a few drops flashing upward into the face of Heaven—and Ralph Trevanion would be lost both in this world and the next!

Large beads of perspiration gathered on his forehead, his chest heaved; but he set his teeth and threw back his head. Suicide was the coward's refuge, and, miserable as he was, he could not sink as low as that. If he had blood on his hands, such a cowardly act would never wash the soil away.

By a life of duty bravely done under a burden of grief and remorse, he might hope to cleanse them as the long years dragged by; but not by flinging away the life that God had given him to use for the service of others. It was nobler to live on, and face whatever fate might have in store, than to lay down his arms like a base deserter, when the fight was fiercest, and the bullets were raining down like a shower of hailstones.

His face was white as marble when he turned to the Colonel, and said, hoarsely: "Tell me what I ought to do, and I'll do it."

"There's a brave lad," and Colonel Gordon

grasped his hand in a firm grip, whilst his voice shook with real emotion. "Stick by me, lad, and I'll stick by you through thick and thin, as we did in Kimberley. We made a good fight for it there, and we're not going to give in because we've got to the mother-country. I've got an idea in my head, but I don't know how it will work, and it's not the time to mention it," frowning hard, because the tears had come into his eyes, and he was as ashamed of them as an Englishman always thinks it necessary to be.

"I don't suppose you put much store about your own looks?" he said, after a silence of several minutes.

"I? Good gracious, no!" in a shocked tone, as if conceit were as infamous as high treason.

"Then you won't object if I spoil them. You can't go on here just as you are; because the first time you meet Lady Dacre she might faint at the sight of you; but I'll undertake to disguise you so that your own mother, if you had one, wouldn't recognise you!"

"I don't care a hang what I look like!" throwing himself down into a chair, and pulling at his moustache as if he would like to drag it out by the roots.

Colonel Gordon gave a look at the young fellow's handsome face, and thought of Kitty Carew. He knew the whole story now. The girl had loved Ralph from the first, and every moonlight ride they took together on the Kloof at Cape Town had served to deepen the impression his beauty had made on her passionate heart.

He went away to make his fortune, and she waited for him, feeling, no doubt, that he would propose to her as soon as he had something to offer her beside his honest heart. Everyone knew that Trevanion was the lucky man whom the belle of Cape Town had singled out from all the rest, and it never occurred to anyone that the favoured man never perceived his good luck, and never intended to make use of it.

Trevanion made that lucky haul, and announced his immediate return. Every gossip in the place felt certain that he had come to claim his bride, and lay his fortune at her feet. The girl thought so, too, and arranged that they should have a long *côte-à-côte* ride on the Kloof after dinner, when if he had something to say surely he could say it, when they were far above the twinkling lights of the city, and no sound marred the stillness but the breaking of the silvered waves on the shore.

It was there Ralph told her of his love for Cyrilla Dacre, of his eagerness to start at once for England and claim her for his own; and his eyes flashed with passionate gladness, and his joyous laugh rang out into the night, clear as a bell—whilst the girl's heart died within her breast.

A fortnight later she was married to a Captain Gifford, and Trevanion was best man at that ill-fated wedding. No one guessed that the bride was shivering with outraged pride and wild regret as she knelt at the altar steps; but her face was white as the roses in her hand as the bells of the cathedral broke out into a ringing peal, and Ralph, with his winning smile, pressed her hand and wished her joy. If report had never married her to the wrong man, if the Colonel had never brought that false report to England, there might have been a joyous meeting at Mountarrel, and Ralph Trevanion would not be sitting there—the image of despair.

## CHAPTER V.

### "ALIVE OR DEAD?"

"Give that book to Lady Dacre, and tell her that I will send the second volume in a day or two," said Colonel Gordon, as he leaned over the side of his dog-cart, and put a book into the hands of Sir Thomas Dacre's butler, and pretended not to notice the man's perturbed face.

"You haven't heard, sir? Poor Sir Thomas—"

"Good gracious! Has anything happened? Out with it, man! Is Sir Thomas ill?" looking down with unfeigned anxiety into the butler's face.

In another moment he would know if Trevanion were to sink through life as a murderer, or hold up his head like any other man.

"You might almost say he was dead, sir; it's not the word," shaking his grey head tragically. "Sir Thomas has been more than half murdered right in front of his own windows, just by the front lawn!"

"Good Heavens! But how? Was there nobody about?" asking the questions rapidly with an air of horrified surprise. "Where was Lady Dacre?"

"Her ladyship was in the drawing-room."

"Did she hear nothing? Were you all asleep?"

"We were at our supper, sir," said the butler, gravely; "but the servants' hall being the other side of the house we might as well have been at Portsmouth for all the good we could do. But Lilywhite, the gardener, you know, sir, said as how you might have knocked him down with a feather when, hearing a noise, he ran across from the shed, and found my lady standing a-wringing of her poor hands like a ghost, and the master lying stretched across the path for all the world like a corpse!"

"But he wasn't dead, only hurt?" eagerly.

"It was a close shave. Dr. Adams says he may pull through, but it will be a sort of miracle."

"Dear! dear! I'm awfully grieved! You are sure it wasn't an accident—a trip of the foot, or a slip in the dark? It seems so unlikely that anyone should dare to attack Sir Thomas," said the Colonel, watching Jameson's thin, drawn face with his bright eyes, and longing to get the idea of an assault out of the man's slow mind.

"Unlikely or not, it was done, sir," the butler answered, decidedly. "There was a blow on the master's temple."

"Yes, where he knocked himself in his fall."

"No, sir; where he didn't knock himself, and couldn't have knocked himself if he had tried," severely, as if he did not approve of being interrupted. "It was on the upper side of the face, which didn't touch one mortal part; and it was a nasty one given him by someone who meant him no good; any fool could see that, begging your pardon, sir."

"And how is your master now?"

"Well, you couldn't say as he was better nor worse; you couldn't say exactly if he was 'live or dead.' His heart beats as if he was all right, but then his closed eyes give the lie to it; and her ladyship sits like a statue at the end of the bed, moving neither hand nor foot."

"Ah, poor thing! I forgot. Give her my compliments, and ask if there's anything on earth I can do for her," waking to a sense of his duties.

"You wouldn't step in, sir, for a minute?" "Thanks, I'm in a hurry. I expect a friend," getting unnecessarily red, "and I want to meet the—nine forty-five."

"I won't keep you a moment, sir," and Jameson disappeared into the house.

Not a sound was to be heard from one end of the rambling old Hall to the other.

The thick Axminster carpeting on the stairs deadened the sound of every footstep, and the usual chatter of the maids was stopped by the consciousness that the angel of death was hovering over the roof.

Jameson pulled aside a curtain, and, after knocking softly at a door, went in.

At first he could distinguish nothing, for the shutters were still unrolled, but as his eyes grew accustomed to the semi-darkness he made out his mistress sitting on the foot of the bed, and stepped on tiptoe across the floor to speak to her.

At first she seemed scarcely to attend, but when the name of Colonel Gordon reached her ears she rose quickly from her chair, and made the butler a sign to follow her out of the room.

Jameson was not an impressionable man, but when Lady Dacre stood before him in the broad daylight and he saw the ravages which a few hours of dreadful anxiety had made on her girlish beauty he felt as if he would choke.

He had known her ever since she was a tiny child, with floating curls of burnished gold, when her laugh was as joyous as the song of the lark, and it went to his heart to see her look like a woman who had been crushed by the sorrows of life.

"What did you tell him?" she asked, hurriedly, lacing her fingers nervously in and out.

"I told the Colonel, my lady, nothing but the truth," the butler said, in a low voice. "How the master had been half murdered, and we couldn't tell the villain who had done it."

"You shouldn't have said that. Mightn't it have been an accident?" averting her eyes from the old servant's look of surprise, and gazing out over the tranquil sea, as if she were anxious to count the boats on its bosom.

"No, my lady, no accident. If Sir Thomas comes to himself we may know how it happened, and who did it, but we can't tell till then. It might be a man, you know, whom Sir Thomas had angered in some way—a tramp—he was always dead against tramps, it might be somebody whose name he knew, and then, please Heaven, we might bring him to justice."

A shudder shook Lady Dacre from head to foot, as a look of pain crossed her lovely face. Every suggestion the butler made so innocently seemed like a stab to her tortured heart.

"The Colonel is waiting," she said, quickly. "Tell him, with my kindest regards, that there is nothing to be done—nothing. My husband has met with a fearful accident, but we hope for the best, and Sir Septimus Benson has been telegraphed for."

"An accident?" grumbled Jameson to himself, as he turned away. "I'd call it by quite a different name to that; but then, murder's an awkward word for a lady's lips. They don't appreciate it in the drawing-room as they do in the servant's hall, and may be it's natural to them to gloss everything over."

Lady Dacre turned and laid her aching forehead against the oaken frame of the window. Was ever such misery as hers in all the wide world?—a misery which nothing could cure, not even time, which is supposed to heal all wounds.

Her only prayer could be that if death were inevitable for her husband, he might at least die without revealing the name of the man who had killed him.

Amidst all the sorrow and the horror which were forced upon her, she felt that there was one awful thing which she could not support—that was to see Ralph Trevanion given over into the hangman's hands.

If he had sinned he had been fearfully sinned against, and who could tell the madness that was working in his brain when he came face to face with the man who had stolen his bride?

Sir Thomas had a bitter tongue, and when irritated rarely spared man, woman, or child. If he flung his acid taunts on to the seething passion in Trevanion's breast who could judge him and say he was wrong to lift his hand?

Oh, never—never would she see him again; but she had spoilt his life enough through her miserable weakness, and if he ended it in prison or on the scaffold she felt she must go mad.

There was a cart full of hay making its way across a distant field, in which a number of haymakers were tossing the fragrant grass.

Not a sound could reach her there, but she had no doubt they were turning it over and



making their jokes just the same as usual, undisturbed by the fact that the owner of the field lay on his deathbed.

It seemed a shocking thing to her that life should go on as if nothing had happened, when her own existence seemed to have been brought to a standstill.

Were all men utterly heartless, and was there no sympathy in any of the simple natures round her home?

With a sigh she went back into her room where she had slept her dreary watch all night. There was no change either for better or worse.

The stern features appeared to be set in marble; but there was an expression of relentless severity on the frowning brow and the firmly-closed lips, which seemed too terrible when the soul must be hovering on the confines of death.

"Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us." Had he ever thought of the meaning of those words when he repeated them so glibly when he knelt in church?

Would he remember them if ever he woke from this stupor, and be anxious to shield the man who had injured him?

Low down in the depths of her heart a voice seemed to answer "no!" Vengeance would be the first thought that would animate his reviving brain, and from what she knew of him in the past she guessed the future.

Oh, if only a merciful silence could seal his lips in that last half-hour. She clasped her fingers round one of the carved wood balls which formed an ornament at either end of the wood-work at the foot of the bed, and laid her white face against it.

She had thought her life so dull and pleasureless up to now; but what would she give for the quiet sameness of the past?

There was no torturing fear then—no watching of doors, no breathless listening for foot-steps, lest a worse horror might come than all that had preceded it.

Her life had been quiet and uneventful, and so she had foolishly thought it would continue till the end.

"Sir Septimus Benson and Dr. Adams, my lady," said Jameson's low voice at the door.

"Show them up directly," she said, starting from her seat. Now the long suspense would be over, and they would tell her if her husband would live or die.

She went out into the passage to meet them, and saw a tall, broad-shouldered man, with a good forehead, and curly brown hair, a soft beard, and a pair of bright intelligent eyes, whom Dr. Adams introduced as Sir Septimus Benson.

The distinguished surgeon bowed low, then raised his eyes, and fixed them on Lady Dacre's face with an earnest gaze that brought the swift colour to her cheeks.

"You have heard what has happened to my poor husband?" she said, with some confusion, though she hated herself for thinking of blushing at such a time.

"If you will allow me, I should like to hear the account from your own lips," Sir Septimus returned, courteously.

Lady Dacre, with a look of weary surprise, led the way into her own boudoir—a room that was furnished exactly after her perfect taste, the general tone of colouring being a mixture of bronze and pale blue. She would not sit down, but stood by the window, her dainty head shaded by the bronze curtain, her delicate profile standing out like a clear-cut cameo. In a tremulous voice, she began with downcast eyes:

"I was sitting all alone in the drawing-room, and then I thought I heard a noise, and went out to see what it was,—a little gasping breath, as she clasped her hands tightly together,—and there I saw Sir Thomas lying just as if he were dead upon the path. He could not speak or tell me what had happened, but it was evident that he had hit his head against the marble of the flower-stand."

"And he was quite alone?" with a searching glance that caught the delicate lips in the act of quivering.

"Lilywhite, the gardener, came, and as soon as they had carried my husband in, they searched the shrubberies and found no one. Won't you come and see him now? I am so anxious to hear what you think of him," with a swift, appealing glance into his grave face.

Sir Septimus bent his head in assent, as he rubbed his chin thoughtfully. There was evidently some mystery in the background, but he told himself that, it was by no means his duty to bring this pretty woman into a scrape. But he wondered what Adams thought of it.

## CHAPTER VI.

### TWO FATAL WORDS.

"I've come for Mr. Treherne's luggage; initials 'R.T.' on the covers," said Colonel Gordon, in a business-like manner, to the only porter which the small station of Stanpoole could boast.

"Very good, sir; leather trunk, portmanteau, gun-case, fishing-rod, rugs, sticks—there's a lot of 'em, sir," and the porter, a red-haired man, with a squint, looked doubtfully at the smart dog-cart.

"Yes, I know. Pile them up somehow; I mean to take them all. No, no, not there; Mr. Treherne's coming there. Steady, old girl," to the mare, who showed signs of restiveness, "you won't feel inclined to kick over the traces with this load at your back. Sad accident to Sir Thomas," to the porter, as he slipped a coin into his willing hand.

"I've heard such a cock-and-bull story, that I can't make out the rights of it," and James Cook scratched his red pole, as if thoroughly puzzled. "Is it true, sir, that the gentleman's been murdered in his own garden?"

"Pshaw! What utter rubbish!" exclaimed the Colonel, indignantly, as if he had never heard such an audacious lie before. "Sir Thomas fell down and hit his head against a marble flower-stand—and you can't indict a thing like that for murder."

"Is that it? What a mercy there was no foul play," said the porter; but he looked disappointed, as if he had been robbed of a sensation. "And the gentleman's likely to recover?"

"I hope so," said the Colonel, briskly, as he flicked his whip, and the mare started forward in her collar.

Dutch Girl soon moderated her pace when she found what a load she carried behind her; but she went at a steady trot down the dusty road, till they reached a picturesque bridge over the small river Lee, where the driver pulled up.

A man with snow-white hair and bronzed complexion stepped out of the shadow of the trees.

"Well?" he said eagerly, and waited with uplifted face for the answer.

"Not dead as yet."

"Thank God," fervently from the depth of his heart.

"You are grateful for having a live enemy instead of a dead one?"

"I don't care how soon the fellow dies, so long as I haven't a hand in it," in an eager undertone.

"Hush—get in," looking round anxiously. "If any one heard you, it would be all up."

Ralph Trevanion swung himself into the seat by the Colonel's side, and felt as if a tremendous load had been lifted off his heart. Cyril was lost to him; but it was an infinite relief to know that he had not murdered her husband.

Happiness was over for him—the sunshine of life was clouded for ever, but he could look his fellowmen frankly in the face, and his honourable name was safe from the taint of shame. He drew a deep breath, and threw back his head like a thoroughbred. He had received a blow from which he felt that he

would never quite recover; but he could bear it bravely if he knew that he had done nothing to be ashamed of.

As he looked round on the wealth of foliage, where the sunshine filtered in golden patches through the network of branches; as he saw the deer browsing on the tender shoots of the young ferns, and lifting antlered heads to watch the dog-cart as it went by; as he saw the pool with the moor-hens floating on its broad bosom, and a large heron standing among the long grasses on the bank—he thought of the days when "he and she" wandered at will through woods and glades, during Sir Thomas's long absence from Woodlands, when the world seemed bright as a summer's day, and parting the one black cloud of the future. It all came back upon him with a rush, and he sat by the Colonel's side tongue-tied as a mute.

Presently they drew up before the rose-covered porch of Woodlands, and the Colonel exclaimed cheerily, "Welcome to Woodlands, Treherne. I hope you will be able to shake down pretty comfortably. And, I say, let us have something to drink, for my throat's as dry as a desert. This is my den," laying his hand on Treherne's shoulder, as he led him into a very comfortable room, redolent of tobacco. "Here we can spin our yarns over our pipes, with not a soul to disturb us."

Treherne, as we must call him now, dropped into a lounging chair, and was just about to make some casual remark, when Simmons—butter and ex-soldier—threw open the door, and announced "Sir Septimus Benson."

Colonel Gordon was surprised as well as alarmed; but he curbed an inclination to glance warningly at Treherne, and went forward with tolerable cordiality to meet the stranger.

The distinguished surgeon looked from one to the other, his eyes lingering longest on the man whose white hair and bronzed face attracted his attention and kept it.

He was given a chair, and offered some refreshment, which he accepted out of politeness; but his lips scarcely touched the glass when he raised it to his mouth.

He excused his intrusion on the plea that he had come as an ambassador from Lady Dacre, who would be much obliged if Colonel Gordon would come and see her at seven o'clock.

"That will be directly after my departure," Sir Septimus explained, as he leaned back in his chair, and brought the points of his fingers together according to his constant habit. "I have agreed to stay so many hours in order to see how the case develops; and as I am a lover of the country, and rarely get a chance of seeing it, it was a rare pleasure for me to take a stroll through your delightful park."

"If you don't mind a stiffish walk," said the Colonel, with rather suspicious eagerness, "I can show you some of the prettiest bits of scenery in the county."

"You are very good, but I see that your friend has just arrived, and I would not interrupt you for the world. Besides, there's a question I want to ask you," lowering his voice, but not his eyes. "Do either of you know anything of a man called Trevanion?"

If he had dropped a bomb in the centre of the Turkey carpet the two men could scarcely have been more startled, yet both preserved their composure marvellously.

"Trevanion!" murmured the Colonel, drawing his brows together as if he were exerting all the powers of his memory to the utmost, "years ago I knew a fellow of that name in South Africa."

"And you?" turning abruptly to Treherne, who had not as yet opened his lips.

Treherne looked the surgeon straight in the face with his frank, blue eyes, which contrasted so oddly with his bronzed complexion.

"I travelled with Trevanion on the same boat from Cape Town to Southampton. I came on here, and he—" he shrugged his shoulders as if to imply that he did not know anything about his movements.

"Did Mr. Trevanion come on with you?"

asked Sir Septimus, suavely, "or did he precede you?"

"I am sure he did not precede me," said Treherne, with a defiant flash from under his dark lashes, "and I came on quite alone."

"You seem intensely interested in this fellow," broke in the Colonel, who was afraid lest Ralph might commit himself by some unwary admission. "Might I ask if he is a friend of yours?"

"By no means," said the surgeon, calmly. "I never heard the fellow's name, at least, I haven't heard him spoken of for many years," a slight pink stealing into his cheeks, which the Colonel noticed and wondered at, "until to-day. Just describes him to me, if you don't mind the trouble. I want to know what he is like."

It was an awkward question, and the colour rushed up into Treherne's face. The question was addressed to him, but the Colonel took upon himself to answer it.

"I'm not a good hand at describing a fellow," he said, with a short laugh. "Imagine a man a good deal younger than myself, with hair the colour of a scorched haystack, and a devil-may-care sort of expression on his face, as if he had never known a day's sorrow, or suffered as much pain as a finger ache."

"Graphic, but not half-accurate," said Sir Septimus, shaking his head as if he were studying a prescription written out by a quack. "Perhaps your friend—ah! Mr. Treherne, exactly—would supply details as to height, colour of the eyes, shape of the nose, &c., &c."

"His eyes were grey or blue, certainly not black; his height about the same as mine. If you want an inventory of his features you must go to someone else," he said, doggedly.

"Or to a woman," with a smile. "Women have such a complete mastery over details, because, as a rule, they have more time on their hands than we have. I believe there are many women who could tell me how many eyelashes I had by the time I had counted their pulses. But I must not detain you any longer," getting up slowly from his chair.

"You won't stay to luncheon?" asked the Colonel, hospitably, though he was dying to get rid of his guest.

"Thanks. My post is at Mountsorrel, and I must hasten back."

"You think Sir Thomas will pull through?"

"I can't say. He will live if he can to punish the man who injured him," said the surgeon, slowly; "but he is in a precarious condition, and no one could be certain of the issue. Good-morning," bowing to Treherne, who rose from his seat in order to return it.

As they went through the hall, Sir Septimus's sharp eyes fell upon the luggage with its Cape Town labels. The Colonel turned wrathfully on Simmons, and asked him what the d— he meant by leaving it there. The butler shouldered the trunk at once, but the mischief was done and could not be repaired.

"That white hair with the young face has a very striking effect," said the surgeon, musingly, as he stood just outside the door. "May I ask if it was caused by a shock?"

"Treherne never speaks of it," said the Colonel, promptly, "and I shouldn't like to ask him. I believe he had a great sorrow once, and got up with white hair the next morning."

"It must have been a very powerful-sorrow," and he departed slowly down the steps with a queer sort of smile on his lips, whilst the Colonel looked after the sleek, well-dressed figure of the successful surgeon with a strong inclination in his right foot to help him a little faster on his way, and a great anxiety growing in his mind.

Punctually at seven o'clock he presented himself at Mountsorrel, and was shown into the same room in which Lady Daere had received the doctors that morning. She came in directly he arrived, and held out her small white hand without a word.

The Colonel felt very uncomfortable as he pressed her hand warmly, and muttered something gruffly about his sympathy.

"I sent for you," she began, hesitatingly, "I hope it wasn't troubling you?"

"Dear Lady Daere, I thought you knew that I was entirely at your service. My poor girl," breaking off into his usual manner, "is there any mortal thing I can do for you; only tell me, and I'll do it."

"I don't know," looking up into his rugged face with wild eyes; "you'll think it strange of me, perhaps."

"I've lived a rough life, and I've seen so many odd things that I've no power of surprise left in me. Please tell me anything you want."

She had thrown herself, as if tired out, into a chair with downy cushions, but there was no rest in her nervous fingers, as they played incessantly with a little delicate pocket handkerchief till it was reduced to tatters.

Colonel Gordon, though not a sentimental man, thought she looked like a white Cape flower with a broken stalk, as her head drooped sadly on her breast.

"I don't like that doctor," she said presently, with a shiver; "his eyes seem to go through you like a gimlet, and his ears are so sharp that nothing escapes them."

"Two very good points in a surgeon, I suppose," said the Colonel, raising his eye-brows. "I've no right to ask," getting furiously red, "but I suppose you described Sir Thomas's accident—and said no one was seen by your people?"

"I said he cut his head against a flower-stand; and it was true," she said, raising her head almost defiantly; "and I told him that Lilywhite and the others searched the shrubberies and found no one."

"That was right," drawing a deep breath of relief.

If this girl could only hold her tongue, he thought that Trevanion was safe, but the next minute he found that he was mistaken.

Lady Daere said in a low voice: "Sir Thomas has spoken—only two words, but that man, Sir Septimus, heard them."

"And they were?" asked the Colonel anxiously.

She raised herself up, and looked into his face with wild despair in her eyes, as she clasped her hands tightly together, and raised them to her forehead with a passionate gesture. "He said nothing but 'Ralph Trevanion,'" she said, with a stifled sob.

Then the Colonel knew why she had sent for him.

(To be continued.)

## THE MASTERY OF LANGUAGES.

—O—

1. That the power of speaking foreign languages idiomatically may be attained with facility by adults without going abroad.

2. That sentences may be so formulated, in all languages, that, when they are thoroughly learned, the results evolved therefrom will in each new lesson double the number of idiomatic combinations previously acquired.

3. That the acquisition of unconnected words is comparatively worthless, because they have not that property of expansion.

4. That the preliminary study of grammar is unnecessary.

5. That the power of speaking other tongues idiomatically is attained principally by efforts of the memory, not by logical reasonings.

6. That the capacity of the memory for the retention of foreign words is universally overestimated; and that every beginner ought, in reason, to ascertain by experiments the precise extent of his own individual power.

7. That inasmuch as a word, not perfectly retained by the memory, cannot be correctly reproduced, the beginner ought to restrict

himself within the limit of his ascertained capacity.

8. That he should therefore avoid seeing or hearing one word in excess of those which he is actually engaged in committing to memory.

9. That the mere perusal of a grammar clogs the memory with imperfect recollections of words and fractions of words; and therefore it is interdicted.

10. That, nevertheless, the beginner who adopts this method will not fail to speak grammatically.

11. That the most notable characteristic of a child's process, is that he speaks fluently and idiomatically with a very small number of words.

12. That the epitome of language made by children, all the world over, is substantially the same.

13. That when a child can employ two hundred words of a foreign tongue, he possesses a practical knowledge of all the syntactical constructions, and of all the foreign sounds.

14. That every foreign language should therefore be epitomized for a beginner, by the framing of a set of strictly practical sentences, embodying two hundred of the most useful words, and comprising all the most difficult constructions.

15. That, by "mastering" such an epitome in the manner prescribed, a beginner will obtain the greatest possible results, with the smallest amount of exertion; whilst, at the same time, he will have abundant leisure to bestow upon the pronunciation that prominent attention to which it is entitled.

The course of nature combines analysis and synthesis, with a practical knowledge of all the constructions, and with a mere sufficiency, instead of a superabundance of words. Idiomatic sentences become fixtures in the memory, and the analysis of them is so simple, that it is easily performed, even by young children. The latter have not, and they do not require, that critical power which educated men display in their investigations into the component parts of a new language, and the peculiar constructions thereof. The process is altogether different, and the soundness of the principle is obvious.

For sentences learned by rote gradually dissolve themselves and become decomposed, when the words are severally used in other combinations, in the hearing of the child.

Thus, if he has learned the following five syllables, "Give me some of that," which to him are but one word or utterance, indivisible in the first instance, his attention is attracted by any portions of it, which he may chance to hear afterwards applied in a different manner, as "Give me that," "I want some of that," &c. He observes those variations, and by degrees he comprehends them, and employs them himself, not in supersession of the original sentence, but in addition to it. In this manner the analysis becomes, for all practical purposes, complete; and the meaning of the whole sentence becomes more and more clearly understood. He cannot be said to understand each of the words thoroughly, but he uses them intelligently and accurately. He cannot assign a score of meanings to the preposition "of," but his ignorance is not inexcusable, and it is no bar to his progress.

Such is the analysis of nature, resulting from a series of observations and inferences, drawn by infants from the known to the unknown; from the whole to its parts. The synthetic operation is merely the insertion of other words, one by one, into their appropriate niches in the sentences learned by rote. Each new word corresponds grammatically with that which it displaces. Thus in the sentence above given he may introduce "him" instead of "me," and "those" instead of "that." The substitution of the right word, in the right form, without any knowledge of grammar, results from that instinct of imitation and repetition which operates universally in the unsophisticated minds of children.

—THOMAS PRENDERGAST.



## CINDERELLA'S MARRIAGE.

## CHAPTER XXVII.—(continued.)

"PERHAPS, after all, it is best," Christabel observed presently, in a significant voice.

He turned upon her sharply.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean," she replied, boldly, "that she has taken the easiest way of escape from the consequences of her crime."

Bertie turned away with a deep groan. He had hoped to keep the miserable secret, and it was a terrible disenchantment to find it known.

"Who told you this?" he whispered, hoarsely.

"No one, but I knew it without any telling," she answered. "On the night of my aunt's death I had toothache so badly that I could not sleep, and I sat reading in my dressing-room, with the door open until morning, so that I can swear no one passed along the passage—which a stranger or servant would have had to do, if they had wanted to get to the sick chamber. The inference is obvious."

Bertie made a swift gesture with his hand. "That will do," he said. "We will not discuss the matter further."

He shaded his eyes with his hand, and gazed moodily at the fire. Christabel paused a moment, then said,—

"You don't ask me where I am going, Bertie."

"I am thinking of other things," was the response.

At any other time Christabel would have resented this indifference, but now the only notice she took of it was to lay a card on the table, saying, "I have left you an address where you can write to me if necessary. Good-bye."

"Good-bye," he responded, but he did not get up to open the door for her—did not even take in his her half outstretched hand, and Christabel left, wondering what strange spell lay upon him that had changed him so.

Late in the evening the men came back. They had dragged the river, but with no result. Still, this failure to find the ghastly object for which they were searching did not argue that it was not there, for there were so many deep holes and ruins in the river bed that it had been from the beginning more than likely their efforts would be crowned with failure.

Bertie hardly made a remark when the butler brought in his negative news. The young officer was still seated near the fire, with the same strange, absent sort of look on his face, and later on Gott found him in exactly the same attitude, from which he did not appear to have moved a hair's breadth.

"Sir!" said the detective, who had come for further orders, "Captain Carbondell!"

Bertie made no answer—only looked at him with a vacant stare, as if he had not heard what the other had said. Gott grew alarmed.

"He's ill, that's what he is," the detective muttered to himself, and being a sensible man, he straightway sent for Doctor Thwaites who arrived in about an hour's time, and promptly had the young man taken up to bed.

"What's the matter with him, sir, if I may make bold to ask?" queried Gott, respectfully, when Doctor Thwaites came downstairs again.

"Brain fever," was the grim reply, and that same night Bertie was raving in delirium—babbling of the river, telling some unknown person he would save her, muttering incoherent sentences about opal rings and their baleful influence on his life.

Once he called his wife's name, and the cry broke pitifully on the midnight stillness,—

"Cinderella! Cinderella!"

But Cinderella did not come.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

## A FINAL FAREWELL.

WHEN Bertie once more woke to consciousness of the outer world the December snows were lying like a great white sheet over the land, the holly berries were gleaming redly amongst the polished green of their prickly leaves, and the village boys were practising the carols with which they greeted Yuletide.

Christmas was quite close at hand, and in most homes preparations were being made for the festive season, which knits high and low, rich and poor, in one common band of good fellowship.

The Grange, however, was an exception to the general rule, for over it there hung the shadow of a crime, and the wing of the dark angel of Death had only just departed from the threshold.

Bertie had a hard battle to fight with the common enemy, but in the end, his good constitution came off victorious, and gradually reasserted itself. From the bewildering mazes of delirium he grew conscious of what was passing around him—watched the black-robed form of the nurse as she moved gently about the room, traced the pattern of the paper on the wall, noticed the fairy network that the frost had drawn on the window melt imperceptibly away beneath the influence of the morning sun.

Then, little by little, remembrance came back, and he grew anxious to learn all that had transpired since his illness.

At first Doctor Thwaites and the nurse both refused to satisfy his curiosity, telling him he must wait until he was stronger before his questions could be answered, but he grew so very anxious, that the physician finally decided it would be better to set his mind at rest, and risk the consequences.

"First of all, then," said Bertie, when this concession was made, "how long have I been lying here?"

"Three weeks, all but a day or so."

"And I have been delirious the whole time?"

"Yes, more or less. You had evidently been a prey to great mental anxiety for some days previous to your seizure; and you had also suffered a good deal of pain with your foot. It has been a hard job to pull you through; and if you hadn't been as strong as a horse, I doubt whether all my skill would have saved you."

In his heart Bertie thought that perhaps, after all, it might have been better for him if he had not been quite so strong. But the thought was a momentary one, for he was young, and death was clothed with terrors for him. Even yet life was to be preferred to oblivion.

It was a minute before he spoke again, and then his voice was very low.

"Has—has anything been heard of my wife?"

"No; nothing whatever."

"And poor Aunt Drusilla is, of course, buried?"

The doctor nodded without speaking.

"Was an inquest held?" went on Bertie, in an agitated tone. "Please tell me all there is to be told? Any knowledge, however painful, is better than suspense!"

"Very well, then, you shall hear all—it does not amount to much. A coroner's inquest was held on your aunt's body, and an open verdict was returned. I was the only witness called besides the servants; and the jury did not consider the evidence strong enough to fix the crime, though," he continued, in a lower tone, "there was no moral doubt left on their minds as to the guilty person. I was rather afraid Lady Christabel Kenmare would have to appear, but she was very averse to it, and so, finally, her presence was dispensed with. You see, both the coroner and the jury had known your aunt and her family for many years, and they were anxious to avert a scandal, if possible."

"Thank Heaven!" murmured Bertie, below

his breath, and the thanksgiving was a heartfelt one, inasmuch as now there was no necessity for his wife's name to go forth to the world stained with the crime of bloodguiltiness.

"Mr. Goodwin has taken upon himself the whole management of Miss Carbondell's affairs until such time as you are able to see to them yourself," continued the doctor. "I suppose there is no sort of doubt that your wife was drowned; and, therefore, as her heir, you are entitled to all your aunt's property. It is strange," he muttered in an undertone, "how matters have shaped themselves."

Bertie made no comment. He had learnt all he wanted to know, and his mind was more at ease. But how he missed Lucinda!

Not until now had he fully realised what she had been to him, and how she had filled his life.

He recalled how sweet, how tender, how gentle she had always been, and the remembrance of his own coldness filled him with remorse.

He had not appreciated the treasure while it was his, but he knew its value now that it had been reft from him.

Little by little he regained his strength, but it was not until the new year's snowdrops were pushing their green, spear-like leaves out of the brown earth that he was permitted to come downstairs, and then it was some weeks before he was quite convalescent.

During this time he had been debating in his own mind as to his future plans.

He resolved to sell out of the army, and to spend the next year or two in travelling abroad. To settle down to his old life would, he felt, be utterly impossible.

He had lost his interest in things, he was restless, impatient, unsettled. He dreaded meeting his old friends, and he had no desire to make new ones.

Young as he was, he somehow felt as if "the wine of life was drawn," and the dregs that remained were bitter. And yet he was rich, for all Miss Carbondell's wealth was his, and he was now enabled to pay his debts, and keep his name untarnished from the taint of dishonour.

What a mockery life was! A few months ago he was longing for riches, and telling himself that all the pleasures of the world could be bought for money; and, lo! now that he had the money, the pleasures had taken to themselves wings, and vanished like a mirage in the desert.

As soon as he was able he went up to London, leaving the Grange in charge of a couple of old servants, and letting Mr. Goodwin still continue the management of his affairs.

As fate would have it, he fell in with one of his old college friends who had just bought and fitted up a yacht, in which he intended making a voyage round the world, and at his suggestion Bertie consented to join him.

They arranged to start about the middle of April, and, meanwhile, both had enough to do in arranging their outfit for a prolonged absence from their native land.

The day before they were to set sail the two friends were together at their club, when Lord Verschoyle (the owner of the yacht), said, suddenly,—

"By the way, Carbondell, have you said all your good-byes?"

The young man roused himself from the reverie in which he appeared to have fallen.

"I have none I want to say," he responded, briefly.

The other looked surprised, then smiled. "You have changed very much," he observed, taking up his glass of champagne, and holding it critically to the light, while he watched the amber bubbles as they rose to the surface, "you used to be the man of many friends."

Bertie sighed a little wearily.

"I used to be—many things that I am not!"

"That is true," responded the Viscount, "never in my life saw a man so much altered

in such a short time. Why, it is not six months since I met you in Paris, and then you were the life and soul of any company you happened to be in, now—

He paused significantly.

"Now, I am a death's head at the feast. Is that what you were going to say?"

"Not exactly."

"But something like it?"

"Well, yes," admitted Verschoyle, "no one would accuse you of overflowing spirits now. By the way, whom do you think I met this morning?"

"I don't know," Bertie answered, in a tone that meant "I don't care."

"Your cousin, Lady Christabel Kenmare."

"Did you?" he asked, with an indifference that surprised himself. "I did not know she was in London."

She only came back last week from Brussels. She looks as beautiful as ever."

Bertie was balancing a paper knife on the edge of his finger, and made no comment.

"I told her we were going to sail on Wednesday, and she asked me to tell you to go and see her this evening. She is staying with Lady Westlake, in Park Lane, and said she would remain at home after dinner to-night in order not to miss you."

The speaker looked at Carboneil rather narrowly as he spoke, for Bertie's devotion to his cousin had been no secret amongst his friends, and Verschoyle was a little curious to see whether matrimony had entirely cured the young man of his passion.

He came to the conclusion that it had. Bertie's face was unchanged in its listless indifference; nevertheless he decided that he could do nothing but accept Christabel's invitation, seeing that not to do so meant putting a slight upon her, which would assuredly be known and commented on.

Accordingly, at nine o'clock, he found himself in Park Lane, on his way to Lady Westlake's.

It was a lovely, early spring evening, with a bright moon shining, and the sky powdered over with stars.

The leaves on the trees in the park were all out, and the air was heavy with the scent of hyacinths in the beds and borders.

Bertie flung away the end of his cigar as he knocked at the door, and inquired for his cousin.

He was ushered into the boudoir, a cosy room, hung with pale blue damask, glittering with mirrors in silver frames, the draughts shut out by embroidered screens, and an eastern look lent to the whole by groups of huge palms, surrounded by banks of spring bloom.

Lady Christabel herself, in a long trailing white robe, veiled in delicate lace, and with sprays of blood-red roses in her hair and at her bosom, held in their places by diamond arrows, looked lovely as a dream, but her cousin's eyes did not brighten as they fell upon her. He greeted her calmly and quietly, as a brother, but certainly not as a lover.

She was a little disappointed, but her vanity would not let her guess the true state of the case. She never doubted that her influence over him could be resumed at will.

"You look very ill, Bertie," she said, sinking into the luxurious depths of an arm chair, and motioning him to take one at her side. "If Lord Verschoyle had not told me how much you had changed, your appearance would have been a shock to me."

"I suppose I am altered," he answered, listlessly. "My illness was a long and severe one."

"And I was from you all the time!" she exclaimed, clasping her slender, gemmed hands together, and leaning a little forward, with slightly parted lips. "I longed to throw all conventionalities on one side, and come and nurse you myself; it was Lady Westlake who persuaded me not to."

"That was very kind of you, but I had a very good nurse. It would have been impossible to find a better."

"Yes, but paid service, and the service that love renders are two widely different things."

Bertie did not raise his eyes. It was impossible to mistake the significance of her tone, and, though he wished her to understand perfectly how matters really stood, he shrank from telling her the truth in so many bald words.

Suddenly Christabel started, and half sprang from her seat, all her colour deserted her face, leaving her ashy pale and trembling, and her eyes were widely distended like those of a person in dire terror.

Bertie, thinking she was going to faint, threw his arm round her waist to support her, and at the same moment, a tiny Maltese dog pushed his way through the door of the boudoir, against which he had been scratching.

"Oh, it was only that horrid animal, after all!" exclaimed Christabel, with a long-drawn sigh of relief. Then she laughed rather forcedly. "I am getting nervous," she said, while the colour came back to her cheeks and the light to her eyes. "I have not been able to sleep lately, so I have been taking chloral, and I think it has upset my nervous system generally."

Bertie was in a dilemma. She still lay in his arms, and made no attempt to extricate herself. The young man was horribly afraid of someone coming in and finding them in this compromising position.

After a minute he drew himself away, whereupon Christabel resumed an erect attitude, but placed her two hands on his shoulders.

"Is it true," she said, "that you are going away from England for two years?"

"Perfectly true."

"But why do you banish yourself from your native land? If you were poor, and in difficulties I could understand it, but you are not. On the contrary, you are rich, and pleasure and happiness are both within your grasp."

Her blue eyes full of languorous passion, were gazing into his, and his own orbs drooped beneath them, in painful embarrassment. He did not speak.

"Bertie," she went on, her lissom body swaying towards him, so that her perfumed breath fell on his cheek, and the tendrils of her golden hair touched his brow. "Fate has been kind to us after all. I thought, at one time, it meant to separate us, but I was wrong. Even poverty does not stand between us now; everything has worked together for our good. Why should you go for this voyage? It is true we cannot be married just yet, but there is no necessity to wait after the twelve month's mourning is over."

Bertie's face flushed a deep dark red. Her words seemed to him an insult to his dead wife's memory, and they rendered him less scrupulous in avowing the truth. Gently, but firmly, he put her from him, and then stood opposite to her, very calm to outward seeming, but his breath coming and going with laboured swiftness.

"We are both in a false position, Christabel," he said, "and the sooner it is rectified the better. I have no intention of marrying—neither at the end of twelve months, nor at any time. I am bankrupt in love—bankrupt in hope," and determined never to link any woman's lot with mine!

She looked at him aghast. For the moment she thought his senses were wandering, the real state of the case did not strike her.

"Bankrupt in love!" she repeated. "What do you mean? How can you be bankrupt in love when I tell you in so many words that I am yours—for eternity!"

She would have thrown herself in his arms again, but he repulsed her. Painful as it was to him to treat any woman with contempt, he was unable to repress his disgust at this unfeminine speech. He was thinking to himself how incapable Cinderella would have been of such conduct.

"I did not refer to you when I spoke," he said, slowly. "I was thinking not of the mad

passion of my boyhood, but the mature love of my manhood, and that was given to my wife. It lies buried with her in her nameless grave."

"Your wife! Oh, impossible—impossible!" At last she partially understood, and she reeled backwards as if she had received a mortal blow. Never, in all her life, had she felt such burning anger, such horrible humiliation, as she did now. In her rage, she wished that the earth might open, and swallow Bertie up before her eyes—she wished he might be killed, annihilated—anything but standing there, calm and cool, while he refused her love.

It says much for her training, that she so far conquered herself as to preserve some semblance of outward composure. Without another word or look she swept to the door, then she turned for a moment and faced him.

"I congratulate you," she said, with cutting, incisive irony. "I congratulate you on your faithfulness. I have heard that men were fickle, but it has been left for you to convince me of it. What right have I to say this, though? If you have not been faithful to me, at least you intend being faithful to your aunt's murderers!" and with this she left the room.

The next day Bertie set sail for the New World.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

### CALLED TO ACCOUNT.

WHEN Cinderella left Rodwell Grange in the wet darkness of the November night, it was with a clearly defined plan in her mind, the details of which she had carefully thought out, and mentally arranged.

Very desolate and friendless the poor girl felt, stealing along in the pouring rain, away from the man she loved, and bearing in her bosom the weight of a terrible secret.

She had, by mere chance, ten sovereigns in her purse—money which she had put by from time to time when Bertie had told her to buy a trinket, some gloves, or some such feminine trifle; but her ideas of the value of money were so vague that she was uncertain whether this amount would be enough to carry her to her destination, which was Brussels. It was quite natural that in such a crisis as the present, her thoughts should fix on her old governess as the person on whose protection she would throw herself—indeed, as a matter of fact, Miss Stewart was the only friend she possessed in the world.

On leaving the grounds of the Grange, she kept straight on across the fields until she came to the river, and then for the first time she paused, and looking carefully round to see that she was unobserved—an almost unnecessary precaution considering the time of night—she drew a small bundle from under her cloak and opened it.

It contained a hat and a fur tippet—the self-same articles that the butler found the next morning, and brought to Bertie as proofs of his wife's death.

These, one after the other, Lucinda threw into the water, then she stood for a few minutes considering what she should do next, and watching the dark tide as it swept silently along oceanwards.

As her wish was to avoid any possibility of being recognized, she saw that it would be folly to go to Rodwell Station, where the porters all knew her, and where no doubt, the news of Miss Carboneil's murder was already perfectly well known. The next station farther up the line was Licham, and that was a distance of about five miles or thereabout—a long way when one is as tired and exhausted as she was.

Nevertheless, she determined to walk it, and prepared to set out along the towing path—which was as near a route as she could select, for the river ran pretty straight from Rodwell to Licham.

Before she had proceeded many yards, she



heard behind her the clanking of metal, which even as she listened came nearer. Something was approaching her, but what it was she could not guess.

An unreasoning terror took possession of her. Was she being pursued? Were officers of justice already despatched to apprehend her?

The idea was absurd, seeing how little time had elapsed since she left *The Grange*, but she was too agitated to reason it out, and she at once looked about for shelter in which to hide herself until the man, whoever they might be, had passed.

A few low shrubs were growing on the inland side of the towing path, and behind some of these she crouched down, peeping out with wide, terrified eyes at the advancing objects.

As they came nearer, the clanking of the metal, which sounded like iron chains, became more clearly audible, and a dark form loomed out indistinctly in the gloom.

Then she saw that the terror was groundless. The form was that of a horse, with a man at his head, and Lucinda guessed correctly that they both belonged to a barge which was being towed down stream—yes, she could now hear the wash of the water against the sedges growing on the margin of the river.

At the same time an idea struck her. If she could make terms with the man belonging to the barge to let her go on it, and travel with it as far as it went, she would not only save her own exhausted energies, and husband her strength—of which she would have need later on—but she would also be much more likely to successfully elude pursuit. Yes, she would do it.

The man—a short, thick set, hulking-looking fellow, whose features were indistinguishable in the dusk, and who was solacing his nocturnal journey with a short clay pipe—started back with a muttered exclamation, as his eyes fell on the tall, black-robed figure which had so suddenly and noiselessly appeared before him.

"Darn me, if I didn't think it was a ghost!" he exclaimed, half below his breath, while Lucinda briefly made her request that he would take her on the barge, and put her down at whatever place might happen to be his destination.

"Well, I'm blowed! if this ain't the rummiest go ever I seed!" he remarked, scratching his head.

After that he struck a match on his trousers and held it in such a position as to illumine the girl's face, which was white and worn-looking enough to enlist anybody's sympathy. Apparently, however, it did not help him in his mental calculations, for he shook his head dubiously.

"No, it won't do, it ain't good enough," he observed. "I can't run no risks, not even to oblige a good-looking young woman. Very sorry, miss, but you must try somewhere else."

As he finished speaking, a gruff voice from the river called out, impatiently—

"Now, then, mate; what's up?"

"A young woman as wants to be took aboard the *Saucy Sally*," was the reply.

A loud guffaw of disapproval greeted this announcement.

"We don't want young women—nor old ones either for that matter—on board; but we do want to push on as fast as possible, and not be hindered, as we're being hindered now. Send the gal about her business, Jim, and make no bones over it either."

Jim seemed to think this advice sound, and was about encouraging his horse to proceed, when Lucinda, whose anxiety to be taken on board increased each moment, took from her purse a sovereign, and held it in front of the man's eyes.

"Do you see this?" she explained, in an eager whisper, "Look, it is a sovereign, and it shall be yours—yes, and another one as well, if you'll only do as I wish!"

The word "sovereign" is off-times magio

in its results, and its effect on the bargeman was at once apparent. He struck another match, and examined it closely, then took it between his teeth and bit it. These united operations seemed to convince him that it was genuine, and he thereupon transferred it to his pocket.

"That alters the case. Another one as well, d'ye say you've got?"

"Yes, and it shall be yours at the end of the journey."

"And you'll keep a quiet tongue in your head as to anything as you may chance to see aboard?"

Lucinda gave the required promise, whereupon the bargeman retraced his steps, and entered into a low colloquy with his companion, the result of which was that the barge was brought up close to the bank, and the young girl was helped on to it.

A place was found for her on deck, a few sacks were given her to lie down on, and then the barge was shoved off, and the horse recommenced towing.

How strange it was to be lying there, under the stormy sky, with the fresh, wet wind blowing on her upturned face, while the boat swept on, noiselessly, save for the faint wash of the water in its wake!

She had not asked the man where they were going, to neither did she much care, so long as she knew she was being borne away from Redwall and all the horror of the last forty-eight hours. What she felt the necessity of, was rest—rest for the body, if not for the brain.

By this time the night was much quieter, and faint streaks in the eastern sky announced that morning was not far away, although, as yet, it was still too dark to distinguish objects with any degree of clearness.

Lucinda had not been in her present position very long when she was startled by a sound that seemed to come from below—the sound of a deep, prolonged groan.

She half raised herself on her elbow, and listened intently. All was still, but a few minutes later the sound was repeated again and again.

The girl sprang up from her recumbent posture, and went to the man who was steering, and who, beside herself, she had believed to be the only person on board.

He was, as far as she could make out by the light of a lantern on the deck, even surlier and more ill-looking than he whom she had first accosted.

"Do you know there is some one down below?" she asked, timidly, rather alarmed at his unprepossessing appearance.

"Well, what o' that?"

"He is ill."

"Queen Anne's dead," he responded, gruffly; "but I don't know that that is any concern of yours, nor mine neither, for that matter!"

"Only I thought that perhaps I might help him—give him water, or something of that kind."

"Then you thought wrong. You'll just mind your own business, that's what you'll do, and go and lay down quiet, without asein' and hearin' more than you are intended to see and hear."

Lucinda was a little frightened at his tone, which was gruff and menacing. She obeyed the mandate in so far as returning to her place went, but her ears were on the alert to catch any sounds, and she was wondering who the man could be—for the voice was that of a man—who seemed in such a deplorable condition.

For the moment she had even forgotten her own troubles, and the peril of her situation—a respite which, however, could not last long! Again the silence was broken; but this time words were audible.

"Jim!" said the sufferer, with an apparent attempt to raise his voice, "Jim, I'm very bad, mate. I shan't last long, and I don't like dying alone. Jim! Jim!—won't you come and give me a drop of brandy, and stay

with me for just a few minutes—only a few minutes, mate?"

The appeal sounded very pitiful in Lucinda's ears, and more than that, it seemed to her there was something familiar in the voice. It reminded her of her *soi-disant* uncle, James Ravel.

The words were evidently spoken by a man in the last stage of exhaustion, and it was with palpable effort that he raised his tones sufficiently to make himself audible.

Obedying an impulse, Lucinda ran down the few steps that separated her from the covered-in portion of the boat, and there she saw, lying on a heap of sacks, the form of a man dressed in the attire of a waterman.

A tallow candle was guttering low in the candlestick, and threw a dim, uncertain light on the stuffy little apology for a room, and on the ghastly features of the dying man—for dying he most assuredly was.

"Uncle!" exclaimed Lucinda, with a cry of horror—the old familiar name falling from her lips in her surprise, "is it really you?"

He was surprised to see him, he was none the less surprised to see her, and at first he scarcely seemed to realise that his eyes were not playing him a trick.

It was only after she had poured out a cup of water from a jug which she found on the ground, and poured it down his parched throat, that he finally allowed himself to put faith in her identity.

At the same time, he did not appear to take any special interest in the causes that had resulted in her presence at such an hour, and in such a place. As a matter of fact, he was so much taken up with his own desperate state, that he could not spare time for thinking of anything else.

"I'm not sorry to see you, Lucinda," he said, presently, when she had done the few things in her power to alleviate his wretched condition. "It's miserable enough to be alone when you're ill, and worse still when you're dying."

"Is it as bad as that?" she faltered.

"Ay, it is, and there's no getting over it. I've fought hard with death many a time before now, and conquered," he added, with a horrible, croaky sort of laugh, that was a ghastly mockery of merriment, "but it'll conquer me this time."

He was silent for a few minutes, during which his breath came painfully, and at irregular intervals. It was Lucinda who broke the pause.

"Has a doctor seen you?" she asked.

"No, but if he had, he could do me no good. When a man's got a bullet inside him there's not much chance of a doctor or anybody else curing him. He stopped, and looked at the girl rather fixedly. "You told me what the end would be, Lucinda—don't you remember?"

She bowed her head without speaking.

"If I'd minded what you said, I shouldn't be here now, perhaps. But after all, I don't know that I care. I was about played out, I think, and if it were not for what comes afterwards—" He did not conclude his sentence, but shuddered as if the thought were a very terrible one. "I'm glad you ran away, Lucinda—you'd have been ruined body and soul if you'd stayed with me, and your aunt Maria."

Something in his tone emboldened Lucinda to put a question that she had long wished to have answered. She knelt down by the dying man's side, and looked earnestly into his eyes.

"Was your wife really my aunt? Was she, as she said, my mother's sister?"

His gaze shifted uneasily under hers.

"What makes you doubt it?"

"Many things—too numerous to be repeated. If my suspicion is correct, I implore you to tell me."

"I don't see that it'll do any good."

"Let me be the judge of that!" she exclaimed, earnestly. "It cannot do you any harm that I should know it."



[A FALSE CLUE.]

"No, that is true," he returned, thoughtfully. At the same moment a fit of coughing seized him, and every instant it seemed as if he must perish, and his secret with him.

Lucinda gave him her handkerchief, and as she withdrew it from his lips, a stain of blood showed on the delicate cambric.

As soon as he had recovered his breath, he said,—

"Your doubts are right. My wife, Maria Wilson, was not your aunt—was, in fact, no relation of yours, though for reasons of her own, she gave out that she was."

"Who were my parents, then?" the girl cried with intense excitement.

"Ah, that I don't know; she would never tell me, and I did not become acquainted with her until you were about five years old. She was a queer woman was Maria, and I never got to the bottom of her character, though I lived with her for over eleven years."

"How was it she hated me so?"

The man looked at her queerly.

"What made you think she hated you?"

"I knew it. I felt it intuitively without reasoning."

"Well, I suppose you were right, she *did* hate you, and the reason of it puzzled me. I often used to ask her why she did not send you to the workhouse, but she always replied that the sight of you was sweet to her because it was a constant reminder of a gratified vengeance."

"And you knew nothing of her past life?"

"Nothing except that she had formerly been in a much better position. When she died, I tried to find a little iron despatch box which she used to keep under her bed, but it had disappeared, and oddly enough, it was not until after you were at Rotherhithe the last time, and that d—d detective Gott tracked you, that the box came to light in the cellar. Maria had hidden it behind a lot of old rubbish that I never thought of looking under."

"Wait a minute!" cried Lucinda, drawing her breath sharply. "I should like you to tell me whether, if I had not been found by the detective, you would have left me to perish in the cellar?"

Revel looked surprised.

"Certainly not. I never had any intention of the sort. I was bound to put you there because I had nowhere else to conceal you, and for my own safety it was necessary that you should be prevented from seeing the policemen if possible. I intended rescuing you after they had gone."

"Did you return to the house for the purpose?" asked Lucinda, glad to be assured that Revel was, after all, not quite so vile as she had sometimes feared.

"Not immediately, but I had a trusty companion posted outside, and from him I learned how the detectives had effected an entrance, and how you and a gentleman had gone away shortly afterwards. So there was no necessity for me to return, especially as the detectives stayed there for two or three days in the hope of nabbing me. I did go back eventually, and brought away a few things that were hidden in a cupboard in the cellar that Gott did not discover; the box I spoke of is amongst them."

"And where is it now?" eagerly demanded Lucinda.

The sick man paused a moment. Even in death the instincts of caution that had been so strong in life, made themselves felt. But they were conquered by his knowledge of the hopelessness of his case, and he answered the question.

"It is in the possession of a man whose address you will find on the first leaf of my pocket-book; he is taking care of it for me until I get a crib of my own again. Give me some more water, girl, I'm thirsty enough to drink the Thames dry."

Lucinda obeyed him. Presently she said, in a low voice,—

"Where are you going to now, I mean to say, what is the destination of this boat?"

"Gloucester, I think, but I'm not sure, for I didn't stay to inquire. I may as well tell you how it is that I came here. I was disturbed last night—yes," passing his hand uncertainly over his eyes, "it was last night, though it seems so much longer ago—the police came while I was inside a jeweller's shop, and I had to cut and run, with them after me. However, in spite of the shot they had fired I contrived to dodge them, and I got down to the river where this barge was being towed up. I offered the men a gold chain I had in my hand for permission to hide inside, and they let me come in. At first I didn't think I was hurt so much, but I think now the bullet is in some vital organ."

This surmise was correct. The bullet fired by the policeman against the would-be burglar had penetrated the lungs, and hæmorrhage had set in. No human aid could have saved him, and ere the morning broke, James Revel's spirit had taken flight to that great Tribunal where eternal justice is meted out—tempered, let us hope, with eternal mercy.

(To be continued.)

IN A HIGH WIND.—The oscillation of high structures in storm winds is a much observed fact, and has probably been the cause of many failures in high chimneys by collapse or permanent set out of plumb by excessive pressure from the rocking motion set up in gales of wind. Tall church spires, built of stone, are known to have a nerve disturbing motion with persons who have a curiosity to venture up in them during high winds. Chimneys partake of this motion in a degree proportionate to stability of their design, and in the proportion of diameter to height.





[JOSEPHINE WAS STANDING BY THE FRENCH WINDOW, FEEDING A PAIR OF BEAUTIFUL PEACOCKS.]

NOVELETTE.]

## A LESSON IN LOVE.

—o—

## CHAPTER I.

"Take hands and part with laughter;  
Touch lips and part with tears;  
Once more and no more after,  
Whatever comes with years."

NIGHT in the Hampshire pine woods—a soft, dusk, moonless night, not the typical January one, the ground snow covered, the air chill, Boreas rude and wild, blustering fiercely along, but such as the Riviera and other favoured southern places are used to in the beginning of the year. The balmy wind sighed softly through the trees, stirring the pine cones with gentle touch, and murmuring to the firs as it swept by; the sky was deep blue, jewelled with myriad stars; the sea lapped the sandy shore with quiet monotony, as though her broad bosom was never stirred by storms and tempest; all around was the calm of summer, though it was mid-winter, and calm and warmth should long have fled from England's shores.

Through the leaf-strewn path, in the gloom of the pine trees, came a female form, not with any hesitating step as though uncertain of the way, but lightly, quickly, and surely, as if each foot of ground was familiar; and in truth Elsie Vernon could have found her way from end to end of the woods blind-folded, so well did she know them, for the eighteen years of her young life had been spent in them, and she was born on the verge of them, in the quaint red, Queen Anne house by the shore, whither her feet were swiftly treading.

On she went, holding her cloak closely round her, till she reached the steps roughly hewn in the face of the cliff, leading to her home, which

she descended nimbly, and sprang on the terrace at the back of the Folly.

The old house was well named, for it was a folly of any man to build a house in such a spot and expect it to withstand the force of wind and waves. It stood about ten feet from the base of the cliff, and below a sort of wall or breakwater had been constructed, which by degrees had been washed away, only great fragments of it remaining here and there, with part of the front of the house, to wit, the steps, the floor of the great dining room, and the hall, which had given way under the frequent attacks of the sea in stormy weather, and lay a heap of *débris* just above the ordinary high-water mark—a melancholy commentary on the Biblical story, which advises man *not* to build upon the sand.

The back of the house was intact, and as a corridor ran from end to end on the basement, and the floor above, it practically divided it from the front, and made it habitable, only the look-out was not very inspiring—a sandy cliff with here and there a furze bush growing.

True, above, on the summit, the pines and firs rustled their evergreen branches, but one can't always be looking heavenward for pretty sights; it's apt to make the eyes ache, and the neck feel creaky.

Still beggars, as the old saw hath it, can't be choosers, and the Vernons were very little removed from that class which "will never be out of the land."

Mr. Vernon, had, rather late in life, thought his profession (that of a barrister) a sinful one, and took, at one and the same time, to the church and a wife. Like most "back-door" men, he found preferment wretchedly slow, and at sixty was still a curate with a stipend of little over a hundred a year in a country parish, and with all the work to do, for his vicar, good and worthy man, was addicted to the fleshpots of Egypt, loved ease and luxury. Moreover, he had a rich and good-looking wife, a brace of worldly daughters, and an extra-

gant son. So he always shook his head with sanctimonious and hypocritical sorrow when poor Temple Vernon pleaded for a little addition to his beggarly stipend, urging the delicate health of his wife as an excuse for asking; and told him that it couldn't possibly be thought of, his responsibilities were already so heavy, the demands on his purse so great, and would add that he ought to think himself lucky to have a house to live in rent free, for the Reverend Mr. Bradshawe kindly allowed his curate to live in the half-ruined Queen Anne mansion, that no one else would have passed a night in for fear that a storm should rise and wash the crazy old building bodily away.

Vernon, however, fortunately for himself, was not very particular. Circumstances over which he had no control forbade that he should be, and after living in it for nearly twenty years he had conceived a sort of liking for the weird old mansion, and hardly felt inclined to go elsewhere to spend the remainder of his days.

His wife and daughter also shared his opinion, and their servant Sarah, a relic of former better times, preferred to live with them in what she termed "the tumble-down old shanty," to seeking a new place.

So the four lived together eking out the hundred-and-twenty pounds per annum as best they could, and but for the stern grip poverty would have been singularly happy.

The young, however, are not content to stagnate like the old, to accept what fate or chance throws in their way without a murmur or a struggle, and for over a year Elsie had been thinking how she could help her parents, lighten the load her rapidly ageing father had to bear, give comforts to the delicate mother, to whom delicacies and luxuries were absolutely necessary if she meant to fight against the ever-increasing weakness which was sapping the frail life.

The girl had been well and thoroughly educated; her father was ably qualified to instruct

her in history, languages, and science, and her mother had trained her sweet contralto voice, and taught her to play better than many an Italian master-instructed miss, so she knew she could earn something as a governess or companion.

She had advertised offering her services, and now as she stood in the porch, she held in her hand an answer to her advertisement.

For a moment she hesitated, then opening the door crossed the stone hall that struck chilly coming in from the warm air, and entered a small room, destitute of everything in the way of furniture save the barest necessities.

Here Mrs. Vernon was seated in a wicker arm-chair, her head supported by a pillow, knitting a sock, while opposite was Mr. Vernon, poring over an old book lent by a friend.

"My dear, where have you been all this time?" asked the mother, tenderly and anxiously, glancing at the clock. "It has been dark over two hours."

"I have been to the post-office, mother," replied the girl, tossing aside her hat, and letting the clock drop off as she bent down to kiss her.

"To the post-office? That is four miles there and back, Elsie!"

"Yes."

"It would not take you two hours to walk four miles?"

"I waited for the post to come in."

"My dear! Why?"

"Because I was expecting a letter, and I—I—could not wait. I knew if I did not fetch it myself this afternoon, that I should not get it until twelve to-morrow, and I was so anxious."

"Why, child? Who is the letter from?"

"From Miss Hardey, mother, of Hardistrey Court."

"Miss Hardey!" echoed her father in surprise, looking up from his book. "What can she have to write to you about?" for he knew they were county people, rich, and exclusive.

"Oh! mother, father, you must not be angry," cried Elsie, her beautiful brown eyes sparkling with emotion, "but—she—she—will actually take me as companion, if you will let me go, and you know Hardistrey Court is only sixteen miles from here, and I can come and see you often, and I shall have fifty pounds a year, and nothing to pay for, and I shall be able to give thirty or forty to you, and help you on, darlings," and then having come to the end of her stock of breath, she kissed them both vigorously by way of a propitiation.

But old folk are conservative and don't like their settled ideas of ways and things to be disturbed, so it was some time before Mr. and Mrs. Vernon saw matters in the same rose-coloured light as their daughter did.

Still, after a while they gave way before her disappointment and importunity, and gave their permission for her to accept Miss Hardey's offer, though deep down in each heart was an outspoken regret that it should be necessary for their darling to go out to battle in the great world of which she knew so little.

However, she managed to imbue them with some of her own hopefulness and joy at the prospect of being able to help them, and they knew that thirty pounds additional money in the year, and one month less to feed would make a difference in their housekeeping, and once having given way they threw themselves heart and soul into the undertaking, and did all they could to help her.

Her outfit was the chief difficulty, and their resources were severely taxed to meet it. Still, with the judicious outlay of a small sum, several borrowed fashion books, two or three months old, and Mrs. Vernon's skilful fingers, they managed a set of things that were quite creditable and pretty, and the mother's wedding-gown dyed black, and refashioned made quite a pretty frock for grand occasions and at dinner.

At last all was ready, and after a fond and

tearful farewell between mother and daughter, Elsie set out with her father to climb the cliff path, her box being borne on before by a stalwart fisherman, a humble admirer of Sarah's, to the station where she was to take the train for Coltsworth, the nearest station for Hardistrey Court.

"Good-bye, father," she said, gently, as the train began to move slowly out of the station.

"Good-bye, my darling. Heaven bless and keep you," returned the old man, tears glistening in his eyes as she passed away to her new life.

## CHAPTER II.

"Oh, tender hearted, oh, perfect lover!  
Thy lips are bitters, and sweet thine heart,  
The hopes that hurt, and the dreams that hover  
Shall they not vanish away and apart?"

Elsie felt a little anxious and nervous as she gazed slowly on from Coltsworth, through the New Forest, in which lay the home of the Hardeys.

She hardly noticed the beautiful scenery, the giant trees, some clothed in their evergreen leafage, the lawns of vivid emerald hue, the long stately avenues, the quiet woodland glades, where startled hare or pheasant peeped timidly out from the undergrowth, or rose in a slanting direction to take flight from the intruder, nor the gleamy pools spreading out here and there, and losing themselves in the dense luxuriant grasses.

The girl gave an apprehensive start as the house stopped before a large, grey stone Tudor mansion, and she prepared to descend.

The appearance of the house was decidedly mediæval, and suggested visions of knights in armour, and ladies in ruff and farthingale. However, the smart, smiling maid who opened the door was decidedly modern, and suggested Mayfair and present day materialism.

"Miss Hardey would like you to go at once to her room, miss, if you please," she said, pleasantly.

"Thank you," murmured Elsie, following her across the hall, hung with swords, guns, spears, deers' heads, buffaloes' horns, foxes' brushes, tigers' savage faces, and other trophies of the hunt in this and Eastern climes, and passing into a room, the door of which she held open.

"Miss Vernon? You are punctual!" exclaimed a musical voice, and a tall, graceful, young woman came forward and greeted Elsie affably.

She was very beautiful, indeed so brilliantly beautiful that the girl for a moment was bewildered and dazzled. She was exquisitely fair with a wealth of golden hair piled high on her well-shaped head, her skin was like the petals of a white flower, just tinged on the cheek with a faint sea-shell pink, deepening on the lips to vivid scarlet. She had an admirably shaped mouth, and her eyes were blue, blue as a turquoise or a forget-me-not, or anything that is of an intense azure.

"You are cold, I am sure," she went on easily, to relieve the other's embarrassment.

"It is always a chilly affair travelling at this time of year."

"Yes, it was cold," Elsie acknowledged.

"Then take off your hat and coat and come near the fire. Drayton," to the maid who still lingered, "take Miss Vernon's wraps," and in a minute or two more, she was sitting in an easy-chair, by a grand, cheery fire, a cup of hot tea in her hand, and a plate full of tempting cakes on a little palm-leaf table at her elbow.

"Your journey has not been a long one?"

"No. Only the wait at Brickhurst makes it tedious."

"Of course. These cross country journeys always seem such a waste of time to me. Now, if you had driven, you could have come direct, and in a little over two hours."

"Perhaps, if I had had a pair of horses, such as many people about here drive; but if

I had come in one of the Braithwaite frys, I should not have arrived much before mid-night."

"Probably not," laughed Miss Hardey. "I have heard of their snail-like capabilities, but, fortunately, have no personal experience of them."

"Neither have I had much," thought Elsie, to whom even a fly was a luxury.

"Now tell me all about yourself," went on her hostess. "How old are you?"

"Eighteen."

"And where were you born?"

"At The Folly, Braithwaite."

"Where your people live now?"

"Yes."

"And have you lived there all your life?"

"Yes, all my life."

"And have you never been to London?"

"Never. We cannot afford to go about much."

"Have you ever been at a ball?" queried Miss Hardey, her brilliant eyes fixed on Elsie's face.

"No; I have never even been at a party that is a real one. I went to one they gave at the school, but the girls all danced with each other; so it was not like—a real one."

"I should think not," laughed Josephine, amiably. "Now I am three-and-twenty, and I think I've tried nearly every amusement under the sun, and grown tired of it."

"Of course, you've been to a great many balls," said Elsie, her dark eyes glowing.

"Heaps; ever since I was sixteen. Two or three in the same night during the season."

"And the opera?"

"We always have a couple of stalls."

"And you hunt, I know, I have seen accounts of your splendid riding in the local papers."

"Ah, they flatter me!" she smiled.

"You have a yacht, of course?"

"Yes; or, rather, my brother has. The *Cora* lies now in Southampton Water."

"And you play tennis, and go to races, and the exhibitions, and dinners, and the theatres, &c., &c.?"

"And all sorts of other silly places," she yawned, indifferently.

"And don't enjoy anything?" demanded Elsie, her eyes round with amazement.

"Not very much. I can quite understand that you would enjoy a little gaiety," smiling kindly at the young girl.

"Because I have never had any?" responded the other, simply.

"That is it. We don't prize what we have, what is easily within our reach, and we covet what we can't get at, that lies just beyond the reach of our hand," said Josephine, moodily, a dark shadow resting on her fair face.

"Does everyone do that?" asked simple Elsie, alarmed for herself, for she had been conscious more than once in her short career of longing for things that were rather more than just beyond the reach of her hand.

"Most of us do."

"Most of us do what?" asked a cheery mason-line voice, and, turning, Elsie became aware that two young men had entered the room. One was fair, and from his extreme likeness to Miss Hardey she concluded was her brother; the other was dark as herself, and very handsome.

"Want what we can't have," said Josephine, a tantalising smile curling the corners of her mouth as she held out her hand to the dark young man. "Don't you think I'm right, Bertie?" staring straight into his sombre orbs as she asked the question.

"Perhaps you are," he laughed.

"The hare hunted of more value than the hare shot."

"Of course," chimed in her brother. "One affords good sport, the other simply makes an appetising dish, if well jugged, or does to send as a present to some non-sporting friend. But introduce us, Josephine," with a glance at Elsie's downcast, long-fringed lids.

"Mr. Tremaine, Miss Vernon, and my graceless brother Tom."



"Now, that's too bad, Joe!" expostulated Tom, as he shook hands vigorously. "Miss Vernon will think I have no virtues if my own sister speaks so disparagingly of me!"

"*Tant mieux*," she retorted, lightly, with a meaning look, "then you'll have no chance of carrying on your usual plan of campaign with success."

"My usual plan! What's that?" he asked, innocently.

"No need to tell you, is there, Bertie?"

"None," replied Mr. Tremaine at once. "The roving bee, that flits from flower to flower, is nothing to him!"

"Shut up!" muttered Hardey, *sotto voce*, as he seated himself by Elsie, and began to pay her assiduous attention, which embarrassed her considerably, for she was unused to the society of young men, and shy with them.

However, her shyness seemed to have a charm for him, which could hardly be wondered at, seeing that he was used to the women of his world, interested, artificial, *blond*, even in their first season; lacking by reason of being brought up in a moral kind of forcing-house, and taught to look upon a rich marriage as the chief object of their existence, that sweet innocence of youth, a young girl's chief charm, perfect purity.

He, being the only son of a rich man, and having, besides, a long pedigree, had been hunted, and harried, and chivied to death by matrimonial mammas with marriageable daughters, and by women on their own account of every class and description, until he was almost afraid to speak to a woman seriously, and had adopted a light and frivolous manner, to save himself from the imputation of having "intentions" if he valued twice with the same girl in one evening.

It was therefore a new sensation for him to sit beside a woman who looked anywhere but at him, who answered in monosyllables, and seemed actually afraid of him—a feeling which he generally experienced when talking to any female, unless she was old enough to be his grandmother or married.

Besides, she was very pleasant to look at, different from the artistically got-up ladies of the *beau monde*. Not actually handsome, or even pretty, because her features were irregular and her mouth wide, but her eyes were splendid, her hair soft and wavy, and her skin childlike in its softness and purity of tint, and her cheek mantled frequently at some word or half-implied compliment of his.

Meanwhile, Tremaine had thrown himself into an easy-chair by Miss Hardey, and was asking for some tea.

"What sport have you had to-day?" she asked, as she gave him a cup.

"Pretty good. Three brace black game, some widgeon, a hare or two, and a golden crane."

"That you must have stuffed, and set up for me," she commanded.

"Of course. Anything you wish."

"How agreeable you are," she said, mockingly, an inscrutable smile on her beautiful lips, "and complacent."

"I always am," he returned in low and meaning tones. "It is you who are not."

"Thanks. You are the first person who has ever had the courage to tell me I am disagreeable to my face."

"You know what I mean, Josephine," he expostulated.

"My dear boy," she said, lightly, "how can I possibly know what you mean? I am not a witch. I only know what you say, that I am disagreeable."

"At any rate you have bewitched me."

"Pooh! Nonsense!"

"You are perfectly well aware that it is not nonsense—at least to me."

"Really?"

Her manner was cool and indifferent, and seemed to exasperate the young man.

"You are cruel," he said in low vehement tones, while his sombre eyes flashed ominously. "Like all women, you love to torture the thing that loves you."

"Do you call yourself a thing!" she asked, turning her calm eyes on him, and arching her delicately pencilled brows interrogatively.

"You seem to think I am!" he rejoined bitterly. "Something less than a man."

"Indeed! Well, I wouldn't abuse myself if I were you, you'll find plenty ready to do that amongst your enemies."

"And amongst those who pretend to be my friends as well," he retorted, pointedly.

"Really! You are unfortunate in your choice of friends."

"I begin to think I am," he agreed somewhat sullenly.

"Then—why not give up the old and seek some new ones?" she queried, languidly, looking at him with a little insolent smile.

"Because I can't, you know I can't," he said, a ring of despair, or something very like it in his voice.

"As I told you before, I know nothing," she returned, a trifle haughtily. "Miss Vernon," rising and looking at the clock, "it is time we went to dress for dinner. Will you stay, Bertie?"

"Not to-night, thanks," he answered, hurriedly, as he held open the door with ceremonious politeness for them to pass out.

For a moment Miss Hardey looked at him, a certain amount of inquiry visible in her large eyes.

"Come to-morrow," she said, imperiously, as she swept through the door, followed timidly by Elsie.

### CHAPTER III.

"She will not love, Nor see love's ways, how sore they are and steep. Come hence, let be, lie still; it is enough, Love is a barren sea, bitter and deep."

ELsie was up early the next morning, and found her way down to the breakfast-room. Here she found Miss Hardey.

Josephine was standing by the window, a long French window that opened to the ground, feeding a pair of beautiful peacocks, that strutted up and down the terrace in the sunshine, with dainty crumbs. She turned half round as Elsie entered.

"You are an early riser, I see, Miss Vernon," she said, pleasantly. "Did you sleep well?"

"Very well, thank you," replied the girl, studying the other closely, and feeling secretly delighted at seeing she wore a blue serge gown somewhat similar to her own, only of much finer texture, and more stylishly made.

"My pets," continued Miss Hardey, with a wave of the hand towards the peacocks, "Peter and Paul. Peter is a lady, still I think the Biblical name suits her."

"Admirably," murmured the other, hardly knowing what to say.

"They are very well-mannered birds, quite pious in fact."

"How do you know?" ventured the girl, timidly.

"Because they always try to follow me to church," returned Josephine with a ringing burst of laughter.

"What's the joke?" asked Tom, entering just at that moment.

"Pious peacocks," replied his sister.

"Want to go to church."

"Better take them the next time you go," he suggested.

"I think I will."

"Think you will what?" asked Miss Hardey, senior, coming into the room with her brother.

"Take Peter and Paul to church," returned Josephine, with the utmost gravity, for she liked shocking her somewhat prudish and proper aunt.

"Now, William, I protest against my niece making such an exhibition of herself before all the village," exclaimed the old maid.

"No use protesting," laughed Mr. Hardey, with a sly wink at his daughter, enjoying the

joke hugely. "If Joe says she'll do a thing she does it, as you well know by experience."

"And such an experience," groaned the prim dame, entrenching herself behind the urn and the coffee cups, "I know she'll do something awful before she stops."

"I'm sure I shall, aunt," agreed the culprit, coolly buttering a piece of toast.

"You ought to use your influence, William."

"Quite useless, Dulcibella. Now if Miss Vernon were to advise—"

"Pooh! that child," muttered the untouched negative, in extreme disdain. "Non-sense!"

"I'm not so sure of that," put in Tom, whose eyes had hardly left Elsie's face for a moment. "I feel as if anything Miss Vernon said, any advice she chose to give, would have immense weight, influence me greatly."

"Of course," sniffed Miss Hardey, with measured disdain. "You are a man, open to the influence of a baby face, and a pair of big saucer eyes."

"And very good influence, too," exclaimed father and son simultaneously.

"Only a man's opinion," retorted the lady with undisguised, and supreme contempt, as she made a vigorous attack on some cold pheasant, while Elsie turned scarlet, and wished in her inmost heart that she would not speak so plainly, or that she was back in the old house, beneath the pine woods.

"Do you know this part of the country well?" inquired Mr. Hardey kindly, to relieve her embarrassment, for he had taken a fancy to the girl, and her child-like, innocent manners.

"No," she murmured.

"Then we must take you to see all the places of interest."

"Thank you."

"Yes," chimed in Tom, "we must drive you all through the forest. There are many places I am sure you will like to see."

"Thank you," she murmured again, the blush on her cheek growing deeper.

"What are you going to do, Joe?" he went on.

"This morning—nothing, this afternoon drive or ride," she returned indifferently, sauntering out of the room, for though of a kindly disposition she was careless, and had so long been accustomed to think only of herself and her own comfort and convenience, that it never struck her Elsie would feel awkward being left alone.

However, in a few minutes, the girl found herself the only occupant of the room, and stood by the window, idly watching the peacocks strutting to and fro in the sunrays, wondering what she was expected to do, or where to go.

As her wonder and perplexity deepened, a figure came along the terrace, and stopping at the window, made a sign for her to open it.

"Are you all alone?" asked Tom, for it was he.

"Yes!"

"That's too bad of Josephine," he exclaimed.

"Miss Hardey has engagements," began the girl, timidly, "perhaps, and—"

"Oh, no; not at this hour of the morning. Do you care for horses?" he asked, suddenly.

"I am very fond of them," she returned.

"Then come and see the stables, I am going there now."

"I should like to so much."

"Here is a hat of Joe's," unearthing a small peaked cap from a drawer, "and there is Aunt Bella's shawl," taking it off the chair-back where the good lady, oblivious of her loss, had left it. "Lucky she forgot it."

"Do you think I may wear them?" asked Elsie, shyly, her eyes meeting his in a brief questioning glance.

"Of course you may. Now, come along. My favourite hunter, Rufus, has strained his leg, and I go to see him doctored every morning for fear those rascally grooms should omit any of the treatment."

"Do you ride, Miss Vernon?" he asked, as leaving the terrace they walked down a drive bordered on either side by huge rhododendron bushes, Scotch fir, pines, holly trees, and yews trimmed into all sorts of queer shapes.

"No!"

"Don't you care about it?" giving a side glance at the trim little figure walking so demurely at his side, and thinking how well she would look in a habit.

"I don't know, I have never tried it."

"Do you think you would? Have you plenty of nerve?"

"I am not easily frightened," she responded, quietly, her eyes fixed steadily on the ground.

"Then you ought to learn. Let me teach you."

"Oh, no, thank you!" startled and amazed to such an extent that she actually looked at him again, and grew rosy from brow to chin on meeting his glance.

"Why not?"

"Miss Hardey would not like it."

"Wouldn't she? Why?" With an amused smile.

"I—I—don't know!"

"I don't suppose you do," laughing outright, "and I am inclined to think that if you really mean to be a companion to Joe that you'll have to learn, for she is in the saddle nearly every day."

"I haven't a habit," she declared, as though that was a final and insuperable obstacle.

"Joe has at least three, so she can lend you one."

"There is Rufus," he went on easily, as they reached the stables, quitting the subject of her learning to ride for the present, as he saw it embarrassed her. "What do you think of him?"

"He is a beauty," she said, forgetting her timidity, in her admiration of the beautiful chestnut gelding, round whom four men were congregated, whose operations young Hardey watched very closely.

When the doctoring was over he took Elsie round the splendidly-appointed stables, showing and explaining everything to her, and then on to the conservatories, the heronry, the fish-ponds, the kennels, and the other numerous things a rich country gentleman indulges in and gathers around his residence.

To the girl, used to the mere bare necessities of life, all these things were a revelation, just as the interior of the house had been.

She had never even dreamed of such pretty, dainty rooms as Miss Hardey's boudoir and bedroom, where both money and taste had been freely lavished, and the thousand and one quaint and beautiful trifles collected with which a woman loves to surround herself.

The drapery, the silken eider-downs, the long swing glasses, the artistically painted toilet sets, the numerous little tables, and ornaments in all the bedrooms, including her own, were a source of surprise and delight to her, and it was some time before she became reconciled to laying her head on a pillow frilled with lace, and embroidered with initials and a coat of arms, or to wiping her hands on a towel of the finest damask, bordered with roses and other flowers, woven in lifelike hues.

However, she did after a while, and also to the presence of three menservants at dinner, a variety of courses and dishes, bewildering at first, and many other things to which she had never been accustomed. Every one was very kind except Miss Dulcibella, and she regarded the young stranger with suspicious eyes, persuaded that she had come to the Court solely for the purpose of entrapping Tom into a marriage. This idea was strengthened when the riding lessons began, for the heir of all the Hardeys was an obstinate young man, and liked to have his own way, untrammelled and unchecked, and he generally got it, for Joe was too careless to interfere with him, and Mr. Hardey idolized his son and thought everything he did right. So Elsie went out three or four times a week in one of Joe's habits, on a big grey pony,

and learnt the art of equitation, while Tom rode one side of her and very often his sister the other, for Joe had grown quite fond of Elsie, and petted and made much of her, and was quite willing that her little companion should have every enjoyment and amusement she possibly could, which was a very pleasant and novel sensation for one whose life had been without any pleasures, save those derived from the companionship of dearly loved parents.

As the days went on there was one thing puzzled Elsie sorely, and that she totally failed to comprehend, and that was Miss Hardey's treatment of Mr. Tremaine.

Though usually genial, if rather careless in her manner to all, to him she seemed to be quite a different person, and took a delight in tormenting and crossing him. Elsie felt sure he loved Josephine. She was sure of it after she had seen them together two or three times; indeed he seemed at no pains whatever to hide his devotion and admiration, nor Joe that she flouted it. The little companion became certain of it one February night after a dinner. She was sitting in one of the bay windows of the drawing-room looking out at the park, flooded by the rays of the newly risen moon, and enjoying the balmy breeze, laden with the scent of pines and firs, that swept softly by the open window; in the next recess were Joe and Mr. Tremaine, and she heard their voices, and was afraid to stir lest they should see her, and resent her having spoiled their *little à deux*, so she sat quiet as a mouse, looking at the lovely landscape, and trying with all her might not to hear a word.

"It is very curious, Bertie," said Josephine, "but your chief topic of conversation now is love."

"Do you wonder at that?" with a meaning inflexion of his voice.

"Yes, I do."

"Why?"

"Because I like variety."

"So do I."

"Then why don't you favour me with a little variety?"

"Because I want an answer from you, Joe?"

"Was any woman ever teased into marrying?" she said suddenly, with an aggravating manner.

"I dare say. It is quite possible."

"Well, I don't mean to be plagued into it, Bertie."

"I don't want to plague you, dear," he responded, and there was a ring of pain in his tones, "only I think you ought to give me an answer one way or the other."

"I do not see why I should, unless I choose," with haughty emphasis.

"You will choose, for my sake, Joe," very tenderly.

"What's the use of taking all the responsibility and worry of marriage on our shoulders while we are quite young?" she objected.

"I want you to become my wife because I love you," replied the young man.

"Or fancy you do!" she retorted, with the little insolent triumphant laugh Elsie knew so well.

"That's not true, Joe. You know it is more than fancy that I've cared for you ever since we were little children."

"Well—can't you go on caring, Bert, in the same way?"

"Is it likely?" he demanded, somewhat angrily. "Do you think I like to see all the fellows in the place dangling after you?"

"Sets the hall-mark of approval on your choice," she laughed, cruelly. "One man's fancy is generally another's."

"I know," he said, gloomily, "and that is why I want to secure you for myself before anyone else slips in. Say yes, Josephine, and make me happy?" he pleaded.

"Can't, indeed, dear boy. Don't know my own mind yet," she responded, lightly.

"When will you know it?" he inquired, rather gravely.

"Can't say for certain. Perhaps in a year or two."

"A year or two!" in a voice of dismay.

"Yes. Is that too long for your vaunted love?"

"And are you going to let the other fellows continue to pay you court?"

"What would you have me do? I can't shut myself up in a convent."

"You mean to flirt then?" a sterner ring in his voice.

"I shall make myself agreeable to any friends I meet out, laugh and talk—"

"And encourage them to hope, even as I do?"

"If they are foolish enough to do so!" with another cruel, rippling, silvery laugh.

"You mean by that, Joe, you think me a fool?"

"I did not say so," she answered, sweetly.

"You thought it all the same," he said, coldly, "and I begin to think that I am one. Good-night," and before she could utter a word he was gone.

#### CHAPTER IV.

"You loved me and you loved me not

A little, much, and overmuch,

Will you forget as I forget?"

"Cruel? but love makes all that love him well  
As wise as heaven and crueler than hell."

It was some days, indeed nearly a fortnight, before Bertie Tremaine appeared again at Hardistrey Court. Every morning Josephine told herself her lover would come, that he could not keep away, and every night she went up to her room with a new sensation pervading her whole being, a mingling of astonishment, pique, and annoyance.

She was so sure of her gallant young lover, it never occurred to her that she would lose his affections, that he would ever rebel against her cruel tyranny.

She did not want to marry at present, at the same time, however, she did not want to lose this submissive and devoted admirer altogether, therefore it was with considerable satisfaction she saw him lounge into her boudoir one afternoon with Tom.

"We've come for some tea," announced Hardey, sinking into an easy-chair beside Elsie, and tossing a bunch of violets on to her lap.

"And expect to get it?" asked his sister, assuming an air of indifference, now that Bertie had appeared once more.

"Of course, don't we, Tremaine?" appealing to his friend.

"We expect it, but our expectations may come to nothing," rejoined Tremaine, rather gloomily.

"They shall come to something tangible," said Josephine, coolly, as she rang the bell.

"Tea, Bertram, at once," to the footman, who answered her imperious summons.

"You are quite a stranger," she went on tranquilly, playing with a spray of white hyacinth, the strong, sweet perfume of which pervaded the room with a subtle odour.

"You have missed me, then?" he said, in meaning tones.

"Missed you!" she echoed, looking at him with well-acted surprise. "Ah, well, one misses any acquaintance who comes often, and then suddenly stops honouring the house with their presence."

"Josephine," he exclaimed, reproachfully, "do you number me only amongst your acquaintances?"

"You are not a relation," she said, languidly.

"I wish to be one," he whispered, quickly, half hating himself for giving way so quickly under the irresistible spell of her loveliness.

"We wish a great many things that are impossible," she returned, smiling her enigmatical little smile.

"There is no impossibility in this case



except your cruelty," he said, with sudden coldness.

"Don't call me cruel," she murmured in low tones, giving him a soft glance from the beautiful blue eyes that had bewitched him.

"I don't want to call you anything but good and aimable—unless it be 'wife!'" he responded, in equally low, but ardent, tones.

"And I—and I—am going to make tea," rising, with a laugh, and moving towards the tea-table, he following with an angry, hurt look on his handsome face.

"Do you know, Tom," she began, a few minutes later, "that I am going to give a dance?"

"No; are you really? That's right, dear."

"I thought you'd say so."

"And what occasions this outbreak?"

"That child," nodding her fair head in Elsie's direction, "has actually never been at a real dance, so I mean to be the first to give her a new sensation."

"Do you think it will be a pleasant one?" asked Tom, looking at her with something stronger than mere interest in his blue eyes.

"I think so," she answered, shyly, "only," with her usual frankness, "I haven't a ball dress!"

"Borrow one of Joe's," replied young Hardey, promptly.

"That is what you always say," smiled Josephine.

"Yes. He forgets the difference in our size," said the girl, with great boldness for her, only she was beginning to lose her shyness and restraint under the kindly and genial influence of their daily society. "It would be a case of the shrimp in the whale's skin."

"I like shrimps," whispered Tom in her ear, whereat she grew rosy-red.

"I daresay we can manage about the dress," said Miss Hardey. "Now, what date shall I say, the second of April, that will be three weeks from to-day? Will that date suit you, Bertie?"

"Very well; I have no engagement; but, even if I had I should give it up to come."

"That's very nice of you," observed Joe, with her merciless little sneer.

"Perhaps you'd rather I stayed away and gave the other fellows a chance!" exclaimed Tremaine, hotly.

"They won't have much of a chance if you are present!" she retorted. "Of course, you must please yourself."

And, of course, he did. On the night of the dance he was one of the first to arrive, and stood at the foot of the great oaken stairs, casting eager glances upward to catch the first glimpse of his divinity, who had not yet come down.

"How do you think I look?" she asked, going into Elsie's room, and standing before her as though she wished for an impartial criticism to be passed on her and her toilet.

"Oh! you look lovely!" exclaimed Elsie, her breath almost taken away by the vision of beauty.

Miss Hardey looked certainly very beautiful and very remarkable.

She wore a dead black dress, unrelieved by a touch of colour that threw up into strong relief her white skin and golden hair.

Her throat was bare save for a collar of flashing diamonds, and stars of the same jewels gleamed in her ears and amid the loose coils of hair massed on the regal head; she looked a very queen among women.

Beside her Elsie looked a child in her white dress, looped with snowdrops, her creamy neck and arms guiltless of jewels.

"You'll do very well, my dear," running her eyes approvingly over the toilet she had designed and presented to her companion. "Tom will have to look to his laurels to-night," for her brother's predilection for Elsie was no secret to her.

"May I have the first dance, Miss Vernon?" asked Tom, eagerly, coming up a step or two in his hurry to make sure of her, and be first in the field.

"I shall be very pleased," she murmured,

whereupon he scribbled his name on one of the programmes he held, and led her off to the ball-room in triumph.

Tremaine was not so fortunate.

"I suppose I may have the first, as usual?" he said, with something of the assured air of an accepted lover—an air which nettled the haughty Josephine immensely.

"I am afraid you can't!" she responded, coolly.

"Why not?"

"I have half promised it to Mr. Squires!"

"Can you not break the half promise?"

"Hardly. There he is looking for me now."

"You had better not keep him waiting," observed Tremaine, coldly.

"I don't intend to."

"May I have some later on?" he queried, half reluctantly.

"Oh, certainly," giving him her *carte de danse*, whereon he inscribed his name more than once, though he did feel sore and hurt.

He was destined to feel more sore before the evening was over. A demon of malice and coquetry seemed to inspire Josephine.

Perhaps she wanted to gauge the depths of her power over the young man; perhaps she wanted to revenge herself for the uneasy feelings she had experienced during that fortnight when he kept away from the Court, at any rate, her conduct was incomprehensible, and certainly galling to an openly declared suitor.

She flirted with several men, and in an extremely pronounced way with Mr. Squires, a rich young Irishman, who it was well-known adored her, and whom Bertie was very jealous of, and particularly objected to.

She was standing with him when the people began to stream off to supper.

"Miss Hardey, I think you promised to go in with me?" he said, advancing and offering his arm.

"Did I?" she asked with some hesitation.

"I thought I was to have the honour?" put in Squires, eagerly.

"I thought so, too," she smiled.

"Then permit me," and she put the tips of her fingers on his coat sleeve, and, with a little bow to Bertie, walked away with him, and was soon chatting and laughing gaily with the Irishman as they discussed chicken and champagne, while Tremaine loitered about watching them gloomily.

"Josephine, you must really give me an explanation," said Tremaine, sternly, later on in the evening, as they stood together in the far corner of the conservatory, under the friendly shade of a giant palm.

"An explanation of what?" she asked, innocently, lifting her beautiful eyes to his.

"Your conduct to-night."

"Does it require explanation?"

"I think so."

"Suppose I do not?"

"I am sure, in fairness to me, you will answer me."

"By what right do you demand it?"

"By the right of my love for you?" he answered, hotly. "Do you think it is nothing to me—" he went on, quickly, almost fiercely, "to see you encourage other men, to see them hang over you with evident devotion, their lips close to your ear as they whisper to you, and to note how you smile on them, and seem pleased at their rapid, senseless talk?"

"How do you know it is senseless?" she asked, aggravatingly.

"I heard that fellow Squires tell you you looked like an angel!" with supreme contempt.

"Well, he may think I do, even if you don't!"

"I think you look very charming, like a beautiful woman!" he hastened to assure her.

"Thanks!" sweeping him a stately curtsey.

"You flatter me, Mr. Tremaine!"

"No, I speak the truth; the other fellow flattered you."

"Can't you leave 'the other fellow' out of the discussion?" she asked, with all a woman's coolness.

"Hardly, seeing that he is the chief cause of our discussion."

"It is my own affair what I do!" she exclaimed, haughtily. "I can do as I please, and you as you please!" with significance.

"No, I cannot," he retorted, passionately; "you won't let me."

"I don't wish to hinder you from doing anything you please!" she observed, icily, crushing a crimson rose she had pulled from her bouquet between her slender fingers.

"Josephine, are you quite heartless, quite without pity?" he exclaimed, a ring of anguish in his voice.

"I was not aware of it. You, however, seem to be finding out all sorts of disagreeable traits in my character and disposition."

"I think you are cruel to me!" he said, firmly. "But won't you be your own self, Josephine? Won't you be kind and womanly to me?" trying to take her hand.

"Unwomanly! Now?" she replied, with a hard laugh, withdrawing her hand from his grasp. "What next, I wonder? If you can't even be commonly civil, Bertie, don't you think you had better—go?"

She looked at him as she said this; and, though she was playing with him, treating him cruelly for her own amusement, and to revenge herself for those *mauvais quarts d'heures* he had given her, still she knew she cared for him more than any other man living, and thought how handsome he looked, his face pale, his eyes glowing with the ardour of the intense passion he felt.

"Oh, Heaven! It is unbearable that you should treat me like this!" he cried, the veins on his forehead standing out like cords as the blood pulsed madly through them.

"Why do you permit yourself to be treated in any way you object to?" she smiled, quietly.

"Because I love you," he returned, passionately, "with all my heart, and all my soul, and all my strength. I know I am a fool," he went on with deep self-dedain, "a madman, to show my love as I do. To lay myself and my heart at your feet for you to spurn and play with as you will, to ask nothing more, to wish nothing more than a little affection from you in return. I have been a fool, but," here he paused for a moment, breathing heavily and rapidly, then going on in a sterner tone, "I will be one no longer. I will not be trifled with!"

"Will not?" she echoed, with her little sarcastic laugh, for her imperious spirit rose in arms at his tone.

"No, will not!" he repeated, firmly. "To-night you must give me a definite answer one way or the other, or—"

"Must!" she interrupted with a haughty gesture.

"Yes, must. I will not any longer be an object for your scorn and amusement. Either you will promise to be my wife, or—" again he stopped, and again his breath came heavily, almost in sobs, so great was the self-repression he exercised, "I will go away and never see you again!"

"You adopt a curious tone for a pleading lover," she said, calmly, though her heart was beating fast under her silken corsage, so fast that the laces at her breast were stirred by the rapid pulsation.

"The time is passed for anything else," he responded, wearily. "I should earn and merit your contempt if I allowed you to trifle with me longer, to do just what you please with me. I will not meet you again, will not see your face, unless you give me the right to expect some return of my love from you. Josephine, your answer!"

His tone was calm, yet through it ran a thrill of intense and repressed passion. His emotions had found voice, and his passion touched her, and yet roused to rebellion the haughty spirit that had never yet bent to any other will.

"I cannot promise to be your wife under coercion," she replied, coldly.

"Then—good-bye!" he stooped, and kissed

her ungloved hand, and before she could utter another word, turned and left her.

"Of course he will come back," she murmured, a little smile on her lips, as she went slowly towards the ball-room, yet, nevertheless, a pang shot through her heart, the first of many and many an after twinge.

Dancing was still going on with great spirit, but nowhere could she see Tom or Elsie.

This was hardly to be wondered at, seeing that Tom had wrapped the girl in a thick, white shawl, and taken her out on the terrace with a deliberate purpose, which was none other than to offer her his hand and heart.

For some time he had been getting fonder and fonder of his sister's little companion, and the admiration she excited, and the attention she received that evening, awoke him to the fact that he was actually in love for the first time in his life, and if he wished to secure the object of his affections he had better propose before any one else secured the prize.

His offer however, it must be admitted greatly to his surprise, was gently, yet firmly, refused. Elsie had a strong sense of honour, and she felt it would be wrong to accept Tom Hardey, that for him, considering his position, prospects, &c., a marriage with her could be nothing but a *misalliance*.

"Then you mean to say you won't have me?" he said, in less buoyant tones than he had employed at first.

"No," she murmured, almost inaudibly.

"Why?" leaning forward, and trying to look into the eyes she kept cast down so persistently.

"I—I—can't."

"That is hardly a reason, or at any rate, only a woman's reason. Do you dislike me?"

"Oh, no Mr. Hardey," giving him a swift, shy glance from the soft brown orbs he was beginning to love so well.

"Don't you think you could call me Tom?" he suggested, insinuatingly.

"I—I—think not," she replied, a reply that took him aback, and at the same time made him more keen to gain her.

She was totally unlike any woman he had ever met, and his wealth and position seemed not to weigh a feather weight with her. She was utterly, charmingly, and sublimely indifferent to them, an indifference which was a charm in his eyes, for most of the women it was his fate to meet, had been quite ready to fall down and worship the golden calf, in the shape of his rent roll. Now this little girl was not in the least worldly, and he knew if she ever did become his wife, it would be solely for love of himself and not for his riches—a fact that pleased him immensely, for what man cares to be loved and married for his money?

"Don't you think in time you might call me Tom?" he went on, bent upon gaining his wish.

"No, I think not," she repeated.

"Will you tell me why?"

"I would rather not, if you don't mind," she said, with a charming timidity.

"Well, I do mind; still, if you would rather not give me your reason," hesitatingly.

"I would much rather not."

"Well then, I won't press you."

An answer which relieved her greatly, for how could she tell him all she felt, or put into words how she knew he would regret marrying her in a few months if she were weak enough to yield to his pleadings, follow the dictates of her own heart, and become the wife of this fair-haired giant, whom she secretly adored?

## CHAPTER V.

"Is it worth a tear, is it worth an hour,

To think of things that are well outworn?

Of fruitless hush and fugitive flower,

The dream foregone and the deed foreborne?

Though joy be done with and grief be vain,

Time shall not sever us wholly in twain."

There were some people at Hardistrey

Court who marvelled greatly as the days wore on and Bertie Tremaine did not appear. Tom was loud in his expressions of astonishment, couldn't make it out at all. On the other hand, Josephine said nothing at all, only began to quake a little and think she had gone too far.

Even the gentlest and most forbearing of men will turn and rebel at last against unjust treatment, and no one could consider Tremaine gentle, though he was easy-tempered enough as men go. Miss Hardey, remembering his white, stern face, as she had last seen it, began to wish, in homely phrase, that her cake was dough. However, wishing was no use, and at the end of a week of suspense, Tom received a letter at breakfast one morning that explained matters.

"Only fancy!" he exclaimed, as he perused it slowly. "Bertie has shut up his house, and writes me that he is going abroad for an indefinite period—to the Rockies to shoot grizzlies first. I wonder what's up?" glancing at Josephine, who was trifling with a piece of toast, and showed no sign of emotion beyond an extreme pallor.

"Some new fad," snapped Miss Dulcibella. "Men with money never know what to do to spend it," but she, too, looked at Josephine.

"Why should he not spend it as he likes?" asked Miss Hardey, calmly, raising her eyes and looking steadily at her aunt.

"Because it would be much fitter for him to stay at home, and marry, and settle down quietly. A man with a splendid place like Tremaine House has no business to wander about the face of the earth like the old Jew, who had no resting-place. Shooting grizzlies, indeed! Never heard of such a thing!" and the roses in the good lady's cap shook with indignation.

"Perhaps he does not wish to marry?" remarked Josephine, unwisely.

"Perhaps he doesn't, as you won't have him!" observed the untouchable negative, shrewdly.

"My dear aunt, you talk nonsense sometimes!" replied the younger lady with a slight accession of annoyance.

"Wait till he comes back and asks you to be his wife again; you won't say I talk nonsense then!" declared the fair Dulcibella.

"Mr. Tremaine will never ask me to be his wife!" said Josephine, coldly, as she rose from the table, and in her heart she knew he never would.

It was this knowledge that made her sink on her knees, when she was in the solitude and privacy of her boudoir, and bury her face in her hands as she sobbed, "Oh, my love, my love, come back to me, forgive—forget!"

But Bertie Tremaine did not come back, and the days became weeks, and the weeks months, and there was no sign or news of him. She bore herself bravely, and presented an unruined front to the world's gaze.

But Elsie, who had grown to know her well, and Tom, used from childhood to every varying mood of his beautiful sister's, saw that all was not well with her, and strove to divert her as they best could, though Tom was hardly well fitted for a consoler, seeing that he was suffering from the pangs of unrequited affection himself.

He grew daily more in love with Elsie, but gained no ground with her, and at last, dissatisfied and piqued, he determined to go away from the Court and the hourly society of his divinity, and see if absence would effect a change.

Before he went, however, he determined to put his fate to the test once more, and beg her to reconsider her decision, and on the morning fixed for his departure he followed her into the dining-room, where she was arranging flowers in the vases. He spoke again:

He met with no better success, indeed his venture came at a bad time, for Miss Dulcibella only the night before had been inveigling bitterly against "designing minxes" without a penny who laid themselves out to catch rich men, and the girl knew the bitter

remarks were for her, though heaven knows she did not deserve them in the least.

"Elsie," he said, softly, "I want you to reconsider your refusal of me."

"I—I—am sorry," she faltered, "but—I—cannot do that."

"Why not? You hate me?"

"No."

"Then—do you love me?"

No answer.

"Elsie," coming closer, "am I right? Do you love me?"

A painful blush spread over her face and throat, and the little hands holding the flowers trembled perceptibly.

"Won't you answer me?" he pleaded, humbly.

"Yes," she said at last in low tones facing him, "I will be honest, I—love—you."

"My Elsie," trying to take her hands in his, "then why refuse me?"

"Because I am not a fit wife for you," she answered steadily, eluding his grasp.

"What nonsense! You are fit to be a queen."

"You may think so now because you fancy you love me—"

"Fancy, darling!" he cried, reproachfully, "it is more than that. I adore you!"

"In a short time you would regret it."

"Never!"

"When your friends sneered at and ridiculed your choice."

"They would never dare to do that!"

"You could not prevent them. Only last night your aunt Dulcibella," with a little sob, "called me a—designing minx—"

"Oh, curse Aunt Dulcibella!" cried the young man, furiously. "What do I care for her? You won't let that old cat come between us, Elsie?" trying to take her in his arms.

"Oh, don't. You mustn't, I won't!" she cried, breathlessly; and tearing herself from his embrace she fled swiftly away, leaving him half pleased and wholly angry.

After a minute or two he swung round on his heel, murmuring, "Women are but little cattle," then strode out to the dogcart waiting at the door, and went off to seek oblivion in the gay world of Paris. The Court was decidedly duller after Tom's departure, and both Josephine and Elsie found time hang heavily on their hands. They neither of them gave much outward and visible sign of the inward grief they felt, but there was an unspoken bond of sympathy between them, perhaps, the strongest of all—unhappiness—and they grew very fond of each other in those short, dull, autumn days.

They were always together, riding, driving, chatting or making small garments for the ever-arriving babies in the cottages about. Then they frequently drove over to Braithwaite, and climbed down the Cliff path to the Folly, and Elsie enjoyed an hour or two's chat with her mother, while Josephine held long theological discourses with Mr. Vernon, to whom she had taken a great fancy. Then there were the usual round of dinners and entertainments to go to, and Miss Hardey accepted all invitations, for her pride was in arms, and she feared people might suspect she suffered, so she appeared always the gayest of the gay.

Still neither of them were happy.

Each had had a lesson in love, and though they had sent their lovers away, they secretly, would have given worlds, had they possessed them, to recall the absentees.

"Such a lord is love."

Only neither had the power.

Where Tremaine was, no one knew, while letters came from Tom, showing that he was draining to the dregs the cup of dissipation in gay, seductive Paris.

A strange sadness would fall over Elsie when she heard these letters read out, and more than once she asked herself had she done right, ought she to have sent him away to that, when she might have kept him by her side?



She knew more now of the world. A year at the Court had expanded her ideas of things in general, and more of Mr. Hardey and his views.

She had heard him say that, short of a sweep, he did not mind whom his children married, so long as they were happy, and that in choosing a partner for life a man or woman could not do better than follow the dictates of his or her heart.

This was a broad and generous view to take of the matter, and the girl's pulses would thrill at the mere thought of what might be if Tom ever did come back—a thing, she thought, almost too good to happen.

As a matter of fact, he did come back one bright June day, after a year's absence, with marks of dissipation plainly visible on his handsome face, and an air of weariness that made Elsie's tender heart bleed.

At first he avoided her pointedly, but as it is rather difficult to avoid a person living in the same house with you, he gradually let himself drift back into the old way, and got deeper in love with this child-woman who had stolen his heart over a year ago, and who no longer fled at his approach like a startled deer, but seemed more willing to be wooed than of yore.

"Elsie," he said, one day, suddenly, as he lay on the grass at her feet, "I must go away again."

"Go away!" she echoed, the rich colour leaving cheek and lip.

"Yes, unless—"

"Unless what?" she murmured, her eyes full of fear and anxiety.

"Unless you will save me from myself—from ruin?"

"How can I?" she whispered, blushing brightly.

"Consent to be my wife. It is the last time I shall ask you. Refuse me and I shall do something desperate," he said, hoarsely, his burning eyes fixed on her fair young face.

"I will not refuse you this time," she said, gently, putting her hand in his. "I could not let you go away again."

"My darling!" he exclaimed, rapturously, kissing her passionately.

The wedding was very soon and very quiet, and the old folk from The Folly came over to see their dearly loved child made happy, and were to return to it only for a time.

Tom meant Mr. Vernon to have a good fat living in the gift of a friend of his, that would give him a comfortable position for the rest of his life.

Josephine busied herself about the preparations, and assisted heart and soul in everything. She was delighted with her brother's choice, but after it was over she fell back into a state of melancholy that deepened day by day.

She would have given anything to ask Bertie's pardon, just to hear him say once, "I forgive you," but another slow year dragged its weary length along and she heard nothing of him.

"How could I tell  
I should love thee afar, let's say  
When I did not love thee near?"

She often thought bitterly, for her love had increased tenfold for him since his absence. Only it seemed no use, he was not there to know it, and her life seemed a blank—a blank so dead and miserable that she used to wish herself dead.

"I wish we were dead together to-day,  
Lost sight of, hidden away out of sight,  
Clasped and clothed in the cloven clay,  
Out of the world's way, ought of the light."

She murmured sadly one bright spring day as she sauntered through the forest. The young leaves were springing, buds were bursting forth, the birds were twittering in the trees, a lark was singing blithely somewhere high up in the blue ether, at heaven's golden gate, the sunlight filtered through the pines and fell on the sward in chequered patches; all nature

seemed to rejoice, she alone was sad and sorrowful.

"Only to see him once again, only to be able to ask him to forgive," she exclaimed, and then grew silent, for coming slowly over the green sward, leading his horse by the bridle, was Bertie Tremaine.

She knew him at once, though he was considerably altered, and looked older and graver. Without a moment's consideration she flung herself on her knees at his feet.

"Bertie," she cried, brokenly, holding out her hands, "my love, forgive me, take me back?"

For a moment he looked at her speechless, then with a cry as if of intense pain, he stooped, and, taking her in his arms covered her face, and throat, and eyes, and hair with passionate, clinging kisses, poured out all the pent-up love of three long years, and she knew she was forgiven. The lesson for her had not been in vain. Her pride was conquered.

[THE END]

## THE WIFE'S DEBT.

### CHAPTER I.

JOHN LACY was head clerk in the business establishment of Whitmore and Co., in the large manufacturing town of Storchester. From the time John first entered Mr. Whitmore's counting-house it had been his ambition to have a home of his own and a wife.

For some years he had toiled on, living in dingy lodgings, and denying himself everything but the bare necessities of life, to save the money requisite for furnishing the long dreamed-of little mansion, and starting in life comfortably.

His future wife's friends he knew could not do anything towards the expenses of their married life, for Emily Wilson was the only child of an old soldier, whose pension would die with him.

She had received a good education from her mother, and was in a situation until such time as John could offer her a home of her own. Emily refused to be a burden upon her parents, whose narrow income barely sufficed for their own comfortable support.

And now John's dream was realised. A cozy little house was taken and furnished; a fortnight's holiday from the office was obtained, during which time Emily became Mrs. Lacy; a few days sojourn in the country, and then back to the little house at Storchester, which was henceforth to be their home.

Home! how John's heart thrilled at the word. Yes, he too, now had a home; and more, he had the wife of his heart, for whom he had so long patiently waited and toiled.

John Lacy was eminently a man of method; and as soon as they were settled in their new home proceeded to lay before his wife his plans for regulating their household accounts. All bills were to be settled every quarter; and so, John said, they would know how they were going on. He then informed Emily that he wished her to have a certain annual sum for her own dress and expenditure; and he placed six pounds in her hands as her first quarter's instalment, cautioning her, with a smile, not to run into debt.

Emily smiled too, she did not think the caution much needed, as half the sum her husband allowed her generally covered her wardrobe expenditure, and, like John, she had been carefully saving during the four years of their engagement, so as to provide, with a little assistance from her parents, a respectable outfit for her marriage.

Six months had passed happily away; the long winter evenings had seemed all too short to the happy pair as they sat by their own fireside, all the more enjoyed for the occasional breaks in the form of evening visits to their friends, for they had a pleasant circle of ac-

quaintance, all of whom considered it necessary to show their respect for the newly-married pair by inviting them once at least.

The spring was rapidly advancing, and Emily began to consider how she could lay out her scarcely touched allowance to the best advantage, in the purchase of a reasonable dress.

She was pondering one morning on this all-important subject, when the door-bell rang, and her little maid servant announced that a gentleman wished to speak with her.

"Show him in," said Emily, and a dark man made his appearance.

"I have taken the liberty of calling, madam," he began, "to inform you that I am now travelling with new spring goods of all descriptions—mostly French. They are of the latest style, and having imported them myself, I am enabled to offer them at a much lower price than you would usually purchase them in the shops. Will you permit me to show them to you?"

"Thank you," said Emily, "but I really do not know that I require anything."

"Only permit me to show you what I have," urged Mr. Dennis, for that was the stranger's name. "You need not purchase if you do not wish it, but I should like you to see the contents of my cases."

"There can be no harm in looking," thought Emily, and the man, seeing her hesitation, at once brought in a large leather case from the entrance, where he had left it, and proceeded to exhibit sundry elegant shawls, mantles, and so forth.

"Remember, I have not promised to buy," said Emily, as she watched dress after dress unfolded and laid out on the chairs and tables.

"Oh, dear, no," said Mr. Dennis, blandly: "It is a pleasure to show them to a lady of your taste; and," he added, speaking in a more confident tone, and moving nearer to Emily, "I take cast-off wardrobes; if you have any old dresses or shawls you have done with, I will give you their full value in exchange."

There was a fresh inducement to Emily, who had already begun to cast very admiring glances at a pretty spring silk, and a new style of shawl, which Mr. Dennis had displayed; they were both more expensive than she wished, but she knew she had two or three articles of apparel which she had already decided were hardly worth putting away for another winter, and she hoped that with the help of these she might bring the price of the much-coveted articles within her reach.

Her countenance fell when Mr. Dennis, after examining the well-worn dresses with a critical eye, mentioned a few shillings as the extent of their value; he hesitated, looked again at the shawl and dress, and at last consented to take five pounds and her old winter garments. It was more, by a great deal, than she had thought of allowing herself to spend on these two items, but then she considered they were a great deal handsomer than she could have got for the money at any of the shops.

In the evening Emily exhibited her purchases to her husband, who duly admired them.

"Paid for?" he asked, with a smile.

"Of course, dear John," was the ready reply; "they only cost me a part in money, for I exchanged some old dresses for them."

Somehow Emily did not like to name the real sum she had given for them, though it would have been well and wiser had she told the whole truth.

Six months more rolled on, and a little one was expected. Emily was very busy in her preparations. John made her a liberal present to provide for the coming of the little stranger, but Emily taxed her own purse to the utmost to have everything very nice, as she considered.

The event was over, and Emily was rapidly recovering her usual strength and health. John, proud of his first-born, a fine boy, proposed that they should take advantage of his

christening, and return their friends' hospitality, by inviting a party on the occasion. Emily agreed, and the invitations were duly issued.

A few days before the expected party, Emily was nursing her boy, and considering whether he was most like John or her own father, when the door was opened, and Mr. Dennis was introduced. He began by complimenting Emily on her looks, and the beauty of the child.

"May I ask his name?" said Mr. Dennis. "We think of calling him John Edward, after his father and mine," replied Emily.

"Then he is not christened yet?" said Mr. Dennis.

"No," replied Emily; "it is to take place next Wednesday."

"Ah! then I am just in time; of course you will want a new dress," said Mr. Dennis.

"No," replied Emily; "I cannot possibly afford it just now; I shall wear my wedding dress in the evening."

"What! at the christening?" exclaimed Mr. Dennis. "Oh, pardon me, my dear lady, but that would not be good taste. Besides, the dress cannot have worn as well as the wearer; she may look as fresh as ever, but the dress must have lost its freshness by this time. Now, if you will only allow me to show you, I have the most lovely thing; just suitable—there!" he said, taking from its case a delicate rose-pink silk.

Emily could not restrain an expression of admiration, and she asked,—

"What is the price?"

"Five pounds," replied Mr. Dennis; "but to you I will make it four pounds ten shillings; it is so exactly what will suit your complexion."

Emily knew this, and she sighed as she said,—

"Totally impossible; I could not afford half that sum."

"Oh, I do not expect you to pay for it," said Mr. Dennis. Emily stared, and the man continued: "If it is not impertinent, what could you afford to give? You admire the dress so much, you ought to have it."

Emily coloured as she replied,—

"I have only two pounds left out of my quarter's allowance, and it will be two months before I have any more."

Emily felt that she was lowering herself in thus bandying words with the man; but she admired the dress so much that she had not the resolution to say, firmly and at once, "No."

Mr. Dennis glanced at her for a moment, and then said, with a light laugh,—

"And then you say you cannot afford it, when you have a regular allowance to do as you like with! My dear Mrs. Lucy, of course you will have the dress; and see (you will have it made low, I suppose), you should have something to cover your neck, or you will be taking cold, and it will look in better taste for the occasion."

As he said this, Mr. Dennis produced a small black lace cloak, trimmed and tied with pink ribbons that exactly matched with the dress.

"Yes," said the shrewd trader: "and you will look most lovely in them; and as to the price, that is the last consideration—they are only six pounds five shillings both together; and to a lady like you I should never think of making any difficulty. If you like to pay me three or four pounds on account, you can do so; as for the rest, twenty years hence will suit me, or you can pay me two pounds at a time if you like; you will never know they cost you anything then."

Emily listened to the tempting voice, and yielded. She paid a few pounds down, and took the dress and cloak.

Mr. Dennis began to close his cases; and while so doing, he inquired if Emily had a suitable dressmaker.

"I ask the question, madam," he said, "because you know that dress should be made well, and I have a friend who makes for a very

few ladies, just one or two, I have mentioned to her; she certainly works and fits exquisitely, and if you will allow me I will mention you to her. She works chiefly for amusement, so that her terms are really absurdly low; I should imagine they will not pay her for the materials."

Once more Emily was persuaded; she told Mr. Dennis she would see his friend the next day; and the next day, accordingly, Mrs. Jacobs made her appearance.

Mrs. Jacobs took Emily's measure with professional rapidity, complimented her on her figure, and her taste in the selection of the dress, and departed, promising the dress in time for the party. It came; it fitted admirably, but Emily felt rather appalled at the handsome black lace with which it was profusely trimmed.

"What would John say?" thought Emily, "should he suspect anything?"

So much had Emily dreaded her husband's questions, that she had not yet even mentioned her purchase. However, the day came, and summoning all her courage, she said, in a careless tone:

"John, dear, I bought myself a new dress for the party to night."

"Very well, my love," said her husband; "I do not doubt you will look very nice."

John said no more; and even when the pink silk was on, he only remarked that his Emily, somehow, always looked nicer than other women.

Emily's heart misgave her at these kind, loving words; but even then she had not the courage to speak out, and tell him the error her vanity had led her into.

Alas! this was only the beginning of her sorrows.

About a month after these events, Emily's mother died.

It was her first great grief; and, though her husband's affectionate sympathy softened the blow, it fell heavily.

Six months more, and Emily's heart beat nervously every time the door-bell rang.

If Mr. Dennis should want his money, what could she do?

At last he came!

Although John had made Emily a present, mourning is very expensive. Consequently, her purse was very light; two pounds were all she had saved towards liquidating her debt.

She began to explain this to Mr. Dennis, who immediately stopped her.

"My dear lady," said he, "why make needless apologies? I told you to pay me two pounds at a time, if it suited you so to do; and you offer me two pounds. But see here—I have a lovely black silk for you."

"Oh, no!" exclaimed Emily; "I must not buy anything more to-day; indeed, I shall not," she added, firmly.

"I beg your pardon, I must have misunderstood you, then," said Mr. Dennis; "you wish to close your account with me; I shall have to trouble you for two pounds five shillings more in that case. My bill against you is four pounds five shillings."

"But," stammered Emily, "I thought I was to pay you as I could?"

"Certainly, if you continue to deal with me," said Mr. Dennis; "but now if you get your dresses elsewhere—you must have dresses; and if you do not buy of me, you must of some one else—it is only fair to settle one account before you begin another." Then changing his tone, which had been somewhat threatening, he added in a coaxing voice, "Come, we must not quarrel so soon. I do not want to trouble you; take the dress; I shall never ask you for the money. Why, bless me, many ladies take twenty pounds worth of dresses, and do not offer me what you have done."

Emily took the black silk, and a handsome mourning shawl besides.

"Shall I send Mrs. Jacobs for the dress? or, if you like, I will take it to her," said Mr. Dennis; "she has your measure."

Emily agreed; indeed, she dared not refuse.

She felt she was in Mr. Dennis's power, and she feared to contradict him; even when her dress came from Mrs. Jacobs', and she found that it was a very inferior silk to the one Mr. Dennis had chosen and shown to her, but she was silent. She could not appeal to her husband, for then she must have told her own folly and deceit. And so for the next two or three years it went on. Mr. Dennis called regularly, and cajoled or threatened the unhappy wife into taking the most expensive articles of every description. In vain Emily struggled to free herself, but she only sank deeper into the mire, for at last she applied the money entrusted to her by her husband for the purpose of paying household bills to satisfy the demands Mr. Dennis now frequently made for a few pounds on account. What was really owing, Emily at last did not know, but was completely at her creditor's mercy.

Poor Emily!

Her distress was great, and it told both on her health and temper. Her husband often wondered what could have changed her so much; but the day of reckoning was at hand.

## CHAPTER II.

ONE evening John returned home with a grave, sad face.

Emily anxiously inquired the cause.

"Mr. Whitmore is dead," was the reply.

"Will that affect you, John?" asked Emily.

"I cannot tell yet," was the reply; "but I fear it may."

And so the event proved. Many alterations were made in the arrangements, and among them John was a sufferer.

He was summoned to the house of Mr. Blakely; and with many compliments on his industry and steadiness, he received a handsome present, in addition to his salary and his dismissal.

"Never mind, Emmy," said John, cheerily, to his wife; "with the handsome character Mr. Blakely gives me, I am sure to get employment again soon; meanwhile, I have saved enough to carry us on comfortably for the present. Thank God, we have no debts!"

Emily shrank, as though her husband had struck her, when she heard his last words. What should she do now?

"I must go back to the office for another day or two," said John, the next morning. "I have not quite finished everything yet, as I should like to leave it."

Emily watched him depart.

A painful feeling of coming sorrow weighed upon her spirits.

The hours dragged slowly along; she could not employ herself; and when the hour for John's return approached, she listened, with a feeling akin to agony, for his step, but he came not.

Two hours later than his usual time he returned.

Emily tried to shake off her nervous dread, and went to the door to meet him.

"What makes you so late?" she would have asked; but at the first glance at John's face her voice failed.

She had never seen him look as he now did, and she turned and followed him, trembling, into the cosy little parlour.

John carefully closed the door; then, drawing a packet of papers from his coat pocket, he put them into Emily's hand, saying, in a hoarse voice:

"What do these mean?"

Emily opened the first; it was a bill from Mr. Dennis for goods supplied during the last three years and a half, one hundred and fifteen pounds and some odd shillings! The paper fell from her trembling hands.

One glance at the pale, terrified face of his wife destroyed the last faint hope John had cherished, that some mistake had been made in the name.



"Look at them all," he said, bitterly, "and then tell me how they are to be paid."

The next was Mrs. Jacob's account, fifteen pounds; the others were tradespeople's bills, which John had given her the money to pay, and which money she had appropriated.

"Now, tell me the truth," said John. "How has all this happened, and how much more money do you owe?"

"This is all," said the miserable Emily; and then, with many tears and sobs, she told the whole tale of her folly and deceit, and implored her husband's forgiveness.

"I forgive you, Emily," said her husband, "but you have brought a heavy punishment upon me as well as yourself. These bills came in this morning; at first I would not believe them; but I was soon obliged to do so. I have since been consulting your father, and we have agreed upon what we consider the wisest plan; indeed, I may say, the only course open to me. This morning Mr. Blakely offered me an appointment abroad, in one of their foreign houses. I at first intended to refuse; but now I have no choice, and I have accepted it. I cannot possibly take you and the boy; so you and he must go to your father, who has consented to take charge of you. This house must, of course, be given up; the furniture must be sold; and this, with what I have saved, will just pay those debts and my travelling expenses, and leave a small sum in your father's hands for the extra expense you will cause him. But remember," he added, sternly, "I can pay no more of your debts."

"How long shall you be away, John?" asked Emily, amid her tears.

"I cannot say," was John's reply. And his own voice shook as he said:

"If I find it possible to make a home for you and the boy, I will send for you as soon as I can afford to pay the expense of your journey; at present it is impossible."

A month from that time found Emily and her child domiciled with the old soldier.

The little home was gone; the pretty furniture, bought with such loving pride, and paid for with the hard-earned savings of many years, had been dispersed among strangers; and John was on his sad and lonely way to a foreign land.

### CHAPTER III.

Four years had passed away, and Emily sat alone in a comfortable little room in a dingy house, which bore on its front window a card, "Apartments." She looked thin and old; for these four years had been full of deep, bitter sorrow to her. A few months after her husband's departure, her father was struck with paralysis, which left him feeble as a child, and fretful in the extreme.

Emily was obliged to engage the services of a young girl to look after her little boy, while she attended to the many wants of her suffering parent, her narrow means not enabling her to engage a more efficient assistant.

One day, Emily had sent her child out as usual, under the care of this girl, and was busily employed about her own duties when an unusual noise and crowd in the street attracted her attention.

They stopped before her own door; and in a few minutes the blood froze in her veins at the sight of her lovely boy, borne in the arms of a kind-hearted man, a mangled corpse.

His careless nurse had stopped before a shop-window, regardless of a rapidly advancing carriage, the horses of which had evidently escaped from the control of their driver.

In a moment, the little one had been knocked down and trampled to death!

A passer-by picked him up; and learning who he was from the frightened girl, carried him home to his distracted mother.

The old soldier lingered some time after the little one's death, but at last he died; and Emily was left alone. The loss of her father's pension obliged Emily to give up the little house in which she had lived, and to seek for lodgings suited to her scanty purse. With

some difficulty she met with what she required, and removed her few articles of furniture.

Emily was sitting alone in her little room, considering what would be the best course for her to pursue. She thought of all her past life, of her happiness the first year she was married, and all her subsequent folly, and the misery it had brought; then she thought of her child; and here memory became almost too painful. She covered her face with her hands, and the tears streamed fast down her cheeks. She had written to her husband after her father's death, but had received no answer; and in her misery she thought perhaps he, too, was dead—another victim of her misconduct.

Emily's melancholy reverie was here interrupted by her landlady, who, suddenly opening the door, said:

"A gentleman, ma'am wants to speak with you."

Emily started up. A tall man had entered the room, and stood gazing fondly and anxiously at her. She looked again; surely—could she be so mistaken in the evening gloom?

"Emily, my wife!" said he.

It was John; and the next moment Emily was weeping tears of joy in her husband's arms.

"You will not leave me again, John?" she sobbed.

"Never, my darling, I hope," he replied; "I was preparing to come when I received your letter."

"Have you lost your appointment, then?" asked Emily.

"I have given it up," he replied. "Emily, I am a rich man."

"A rich man!" repeated Emily.

"Yes, my dear, a rich man," said John, as she stared at him with astonishment. "You may look," he added; "but it is true. Do you remember, Emily, I told you that I lodged with an old Mr. Blenkin? Well, he took a great fancy to me; and when he died, having no relations—at least none that he ever acknowledged—he left all his property to me. I had always believed him to be poor; but I discovered, to my surprise, that he was worth nearly a hundred thousand pounds. The first thing now to be done is to seek for a comfortable home, which we can once more call our own."

"John," said Emily, timidly, "can you ever trust me again?"

"Yes, my darling, fully and entirely," he replied. "Otherwise we should have little happiness."

"Then, John, will you please not give me an allowance," said Emily. "I would rather ask you when I want anything, and then I shall not be so easily tempted to do wrong."

"Very well, my dear; just as you please," said John.

Emily never again gave her husband cause to regret his confidence in her. Even had she been disposed to err, the sight or her recollection of that little green mound, with its simple white headstone, would have arrested her steps, by bringing to her mind the memory of those four sad years, during which she had felt so bitterly the consequences of her first debt.

### COLTSFOOT.

—O—

A YOUNG Dutch miller, a long while ago, having a taste for painting, amused himself in his hours of leisure by representing the landscape amid which he lived. The mill, the cattle of his master, the beautiful verdure, clouds, smoke, light or shade, were all portrayed with an exquisite touch.

This artist, it seems, became celebrated and a rich man, notwithstanding that he was once a poor miller.

An artist of celebrity stopped at his inn, and, admiring the truth of the landscapes, offered a large sum, and promised to take all that this young man could produce.

The eye of the celebrated artist who made the purchase was not vulgar, for he could appreciate the genius of the poor miller, who was modest.

Who would believe that plants have the same fate as man? Only they require a patron to appreciate them.

The tussilage, or coltsfoot, would, perhaps, have for ever remained at the foot of Mount Pila, blooming in obscurity, if the great botanist, M. Villan de Grenoble, had not discovered and appreciated this little gem of the vegetable kingdom.

Had it been the tall, majestic lily, whose graceful white flowers are towering upward to the skies, or the beautiful rose of Sharon, or the lily of the valley, which is spoken of by King Solomon, it then might have had many admirers. But it was none of these consequential beauties of the floral world.

No, no! Had it been the Peruvian heliotrope, whose lilac-coloured flowers continue to bloom nearly the whole year; or the tall magnolia, with its green, spreading leaves and pearly-white fragrant blossom that enraptures our senses upon approaching it, then the coltsfoot might have been overlooked.

The fragrance of the heliotrope is said by the Orientals to elevate their souls toward Heaven; the odour is so strong and exhilarating that it produces intoxication.

But the little flower which has excited our admiration is none of these majestic and towering plants of its kingdom that even excite the admiration of kings and the inspiration of poets.

But it is a plain, diminutive yellow flower, deriving its name from *tussis*, a cough for which the plant is reputed a remedy.

It belongs to the composite family, and grows in clusters, as the violet, cowslip, mimosa, and many other plain flowers. To describe it minutely, it bears a beautiful yellow blossom, woolly when young, but very fragrant.

The botanist to whom we owe its discovery calls it the perfume-plant. It was first found at the foot of a hill, growing in obscurity, no eye to gaze upon its beauties but the great eye of Providence which had transplanted it on the globe, and the eyes of angels whose watchful care is even attracted to flowers.

Here were beauty and elegance hidden at the foot of a mountain, whose soil was rarely trod by man; yet the spot was found, the flower was not gazed upon by "vulgar eyes," but glanced at by one of an appreciative mind, and one who said, "Justice shall be done you."

Therefore, the botanist, Villan de Grenoble, knew how to appreciate the humble little flower of which we write. He gave it a distinguished rank in his works; and since then the tussilage has been cultivated with care, and perfumes as the violet, lily of the valley, and mignonette, every place or corner of the globe where it blooms.

Its smiling blossoms peep up from the solitary nook, in the meadows, or in the cultivated gardens; it blooms at seasons when all other flowers have disappeared. Is not such a blossom worthy of all admiration and attention? Most assuredly it is.

Who does not love a flower?  
Its hues are taken from the light  
Which summer suns fling pure and bright,  
In scattered and prismatic hues;  
That smile and shine in dropping dews,  
Its fragrance from the sweetest air;  
Its form from all that's light and fair,  
Who does not love a flower?

Can we not with pleasure cast our minds back to the days of youth, when we strayed through the meadow or wild wood, and heard the singing birds, and the hum of bees, gathering the wild flowers that grew on the bank or in the valley? Ah! yes—yes. Linked with many fond associations may be the simplest flower.

They bring back to us a thousand bright recollections of sunny days and youthful hours, when a fair, unclouded future lay before us.

Ah! 'twas when we strolled the wild wood  
and the river's brink, watching the sparkling,  
dashing waves that came bursting almost at  
our feet, that we loved flowers.

Even on "the wild sea-bank" we fancy now  
we see the prickly cactus, whose spines are  
many; it grows on the barren sand, fanned  
by the salt sea-breezes, as prolific as in a  
garden. How often we gathered them in our  
childish rambles!

Often when depression and sorrow dim our  
eyes with tears, and our mind wanders back  
to youth and innocence, to days when our  
hopes were bright, and joy sat on each fea-  
ture, we call to mind the past, and feel as  
though we wish we were a flower to bloom but  
a season, then to pass away.

Such are, at times, the sad reflections of  
human nature. Yet we must not feel melan-  
choly under any circumstances, but remember  
the words of our Saviour when He spoke of  
the flowers. He told His disciples to look at  
the lily; it tolled not, neither did it spin, yet  
Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like  
one of these. Therefore we must bear in  
mind the words of the Good Book; also the  
Dutch miller who became a great artist, and  
the little flower whose fate has been com-  
pared by the botanist Grenoble to this obscure  
young man, who, from being a poor miller-  
boy, rose to eminence. It is said that though  
wealth and prosperity were his, the artist  
never forgot his dear mill, as is attested by  
the representation of it in many of his pic-  
tures, all of which are masterpieces of art.  
The miller might have breathed the lines of  
the poet, when he whispered as he viewed the  
hawthorn blossom—

Fair Hope with light and buoyant form,  
Came smiling through the clouds of care;  
Glanced bright defiance on the storm,  
And hung the bow of promise there.

There is nothing so beautiful as a flower—  
one such as the magnolia, heliotrope, or nar-  
cissus, whose golden crown is in the centre of  
its pure white petals. As its fragrance comes  
forth on the zephyrs of the morning, one  
might imagine one's self on the Grecian isles,  
or among the Hindoo nymphs, who chant  
their hymns to the Indian Cupid; or, gazing  
on the robe of Helen, which is said to have  
been bordered with a wreath of asanthus.

There is more beauty in the floral world  
than is imagined by many persons. The lan-  
guage of flowers is truly eloquent. By a  
simple flower we can convey more than pages  
of manuscript could contain.

The unfortunate Boucher, when in solitary  
confinement, consoled himself by studying the  
flowers which his daughter collected for him.  
A few days previous to his death, he sent her  
two dead lilies, to express at the same time  
the purity of his soul and the fate which  
awaited him.

The most beautiful flowers are apt to engage  
our attention, but those whose qualities are  
superior are the ones which should claim our  
greatest interest. Such is the bright yellow  
tussilage, or coltsfoot, which has been our  
theme, whose humble flowers were discovered  
away on the foreign shores near Mount Pila,  
where, perhaps, it had bloomed unnoticed and  
uncared for many ages past.

Flowers, minerals, and human beings, each  
have their imperfections; but the most perfect  
must eventually be rewarded.

Gold will outshine dross, diamonds will  
eclipse paste; therefore, it is the genuine and  
beautiful that we all admire, whether it  
belongs to the animal, vegetable, or mineral  
kingdom.

The emblem of this obscure flower is "Justice  
shall be done you."

I will leave my readers to analyse in their  
minds the flower that I have but faintly de-  
scribed. Its beauty and fragrance far sur-  
passes anything I have said in its favour.  
Such is the sweet tussilage, or coltsfoot.

They shall own thee sweetest and fairest of flowers,  
That smile in our woodlands or blush in our bowers;  
They shall own thee a lovelier gem of delight,  
Than they that illumine the veil of midnight.

## FACETIÆ.

ALBERTO: "Do you love me, darling?"  
Claribel: "Have I not had all the chairs taken  
from the room except this?"

"Just see how those crows carry on," said  
a man looking at the antics of a flock of the  
birds. "Yes," replied another; "they are  
carrion crows."

CALLER: "How do you manage to get such  
pleasant expressions on the face of your male  
sitters?" Photographer: "Easy enough. I  
have a pretty girl to manage the camera."

WIFE: "Well, good-bye, George! Aren't you  
going to kiss me before you go?" Husband:  
"Maria, how can you be so thoughtless?  
You know the doctor told me I mustn't touch  
my lips to anything between meals."

"That's a lovely ring, my dear," she said,  
"and it is a thousand pities it's a little too  
small." "Never mind," he returned. "That's  
the one I once gave Gracie. The next time I  
call I will bring you up the one Jennie had."

A NEVER-FAILING SUPPLY.—BROWN: "Your  
teacher can't be such a mean man as you make  
out. I notice his son has all the toys he can  
possibly need." Little Johnnie: "Why, dad,  
those are what his father takes away from  
the other boys."

"Does Miss Hysee sing?" asked a travel-  
ling man of a friend, who had just introduced  
him to a young lady. "Well, that's largely a  
matter of faith." "I don't understand you."  
"It depends altogether on which you believe  
—her mother or her neighbours."

ETHEL: "Do you think he loves you,  
Nellie?" Nellie: "Oh, I am certain of it.  
Why, he wants me to marry so much that he  
has borrowed money of papa for us to get  
married on—a thing his proud, sensitive soul  
could not brook if he did not love me."

ENGAGEMENT ANNOUNCED.—"Clara," he  
whispered, ardently, "do you think you could  
bring yourself to marry me?" "No, George,"  
she answered, with a sad little smile. "I  
couldn't very well bring myself; I'm so timid.  
You might bring me, though, George."

TO AVOID SUSPICION.—Aspiring Poet: "I  
wish to leave you some verses for your in-  
spection. I will leave also my address and  
stamps, so that in the possibility of your not  
publishing the lines you may mail the manu-  
script to me." Practical Editor: "You may  
leave the stamps if you please, but it will save  
time and trouble if you will take the manu-  
script and address with you."

THE HERCOOP QUESTION.—WHERE WOMAN  
EXCELS.—When a woman has a hen to drive  
into the coop she takes hold of her skirts with  
both hands, shakes them quietly at the delin-  
quent and says, "Shoo there!" The hen  
takes one look at the object to assure herself  
that it is a woman, and then stalks majesti-  
cally into the coop. A man doesn't do it in  
that way. He goes outdoors, saying: "It's  
singular nobody can drive a hen but me!"  
and, picking up a stick of wood, hurls it at the  
offending bird and yells: "Get in there, you  
thief!" The hen immediately loses her  
reason and dashes to the other end of the  
yard. The man plunges after her. She comes  
back with her head down, her wings out, and  
is followed by a miscellaneous assortment of  
wood, fruit cans, linkers, and a very angry  
man in the rear. Then she skims under the  
barn and over a fence or two, and around the  
house back to the coop again, all the while  
talking as only an excited hen can talk, and  
all the while followed by things convenient for  
throwing and by a man whose hat is on the  
ground and whose perspiration is limitless.  
By this time the other hens have come to take  
a hand in the debate and help dodge missiles.  
The man vows that every hen on the place  
shall be sold at once, puts on his hat and coat  
and goes to town. The woman comes out,  
goes to work, and has every one of those hens  
housed and counted inside of two minutes.

JOHNST, aged six has been banished to the bed-  
room for using bad words to his younger  
brother Sam, and told that he must remain  
till sorry for his misconduct. After kicking  
and screaming a few minutes he became quiet  
and calling Sam to the door, said: "Sam if I'm  
ever sorry for calling you names—and I'll have  
to stay here an awful while before I am—the  
first thing I'll do when I get out will be to lick  
you for telling on me." After a long pause he  
continued: "You'd better be getting ready,  
Sam, I'm beginning to feel pretty sorry."

SHE WISHED TO AVOID EMBARRASSMENT.—  
Husband: "Well, I'm sick of it. Nothing  
but the continuous growl about the lodge.  
Supposing I am a little untidy occasionally—"  
Wife: "It is not that, dear."  
Husband: "Well, supposing I am sometimes  
a little late—"  
Wife: "It is not that,  
dear; but twice lately I have come down in  
my nightgown to let you in, and found it was  
the milkman. It was so embarrassing. Now,  
if you could only arrange to come home just  
after the eight o'clock post it would be so much  
more convenient."

"MARION, I rejected Mr. Smyth last even-  
ing." "Why, Kate?" "He was entirely too  
profuse." "Impossible! A lover couldn't be."  
"And he was as gushing as he was  
voluminous. He praised my eyes, hair, and  
complexion. He—" "O, Kate, that was just  
lovely." "But his grammar, Marion, that  
was the real which wrecked him. He said,  
'Your eyes is,' and all that. Goodness! I  
expected to hear him say, 'Your nose are.'  
I love him, and it makes my heart ache to  
think about it; but I can never marry him.  
No—never."

THE OLD MAN'S LITTLE MISSION.—"What is  
your mission here, sir?" asked the old man  
with a frown. "I am on three missions, sir,"  
replied the poor young man, who was also a  
humorist. "Well, what are they?" inquired  
the old man, impatiently. "Per-mission to  
marry your daughter, ad-mission to your  
family circle, and sub-mission to the regula-  
tions of your household." "Ugh!" grunted  
the old man, who was something of a joker  
himself. "I have one little mission to offer  
before I conclude any arrangements with you."  
"Name it," cried the poor young man,  
eagerly. "I will be only too glad to perform  
it." "Dis-mission!" shrieked the old man  
with a loud, discordant laugh, and the poor  
young man fainted at his feet.

Pride never forgets itself, never has a play  
spell or frolic; it is stiff from morning till  
night, from top to bottom, like a sled stake.

There ain't but very little ginowine good  
sense in this world any how, and what little  
there is ain't in market; it is held for a divid-  
end.

Those who hav made up their minds tew  
lead a life ov enjoyment will find the following  
recipies a grate help tew them: "To one ounce  
of pleasure add a pound ov repentance."

ADVERTISY is a politeness which reduces our  
vanity and strengthens our virtue. Even a  
boy never feels half so good as when he has  
just been spanked and sot away tew cool.

PEDANTRY is the science of investing what  
little yu know in one kind of perfumery, and  
insisting upon sticking that under every man's  
nose whom yu meet.

Lieing is like trying tew hide in a fog; if  
yu move about yure are in danger ov bump-  
ing yure hed agin the truth, and as soon as  
the fog blows oph yu are gone enny how.

MARRYING [an angel] is the poetry ov mar-  
riage, but living with her is the prose; and  
this is all well enuff if the taste ov the poetry  
haint spiltte our relian for the prose.

The man who lives on hope must pick the  
bones ov disappointment.

The devil is sed tew be the father ov lies.  
If this is so, he haz got a large family, and a  
grate menny promising children among them.

Life is like a mug ov beer—froth at the  
top, ail in the middle, and settlings at the  
bottom.—JOHN BILLINGS.



## SOCIETY.

THE Queen has given her permission for the marriage of Miss Puleston and Mr. Morris to take place in the Chapel Royal, Whitehall, on Tuesday, July 2nd. No marriage has been celebrated there during the past thirteen years, and the wedding of the popular daughter of so popular a man as Sir John Puleston is likely to be a very interesting function.

THERE has of late been a renewal of the suggestion that one of our Royal Princes should take up his residence in Dublin, and act as Irish Viceroy. If this suggestion is ever seriously entertained, it will probably reopen the question of forming a corps of Irish Foot Guards. This proposal, which was a good deal talked of some time ago, fell through for several reasons, but will probably meet with more acceptance now.

THE corps would probably consist of two battalions, quartered one in Dublin and one at the Curragh, and would in the first instance be formed of men, chosen for their physique and good conduct from the already existing Irish regiments. The officers would also be obtained in the same manner, the preference being given to Irish officers of good family.

IF the corps of Irish Guards is ever formed, it will probably be a physically finer body than the English Foot Guards, as anyone who has noticed the Dublin Metropolitan Police or the Royal Irish Constabulary will readily believe. I don't suppose that there is a force of bigger men in the world than the force of the Dublin Metropolitan Police, who are veritable sons of Anak.

THIS was the Marchioness of Salisbury's reception at the Foreign Office. At eleven o'clock the scene therein was a truly magnificent one. The varied hues of costumes and glittering decorations of the Ambassadors, Envoys and Ministers Plenipotentiary from every country, mingling with the British and foreign ministerial and military uniforms, were in themselves a picturesque sight. But when to these are added the brilliant toilettes of the ladies, it is impossible to give an adequate idea of the splendour of the spectacle. The display of flowers was superb and the fine suite of apartments were liberally adorned with palms, ferns, double red geraniums, and a variety of exotics.

BUT the climax of the scene was not reached until the arrival of the Prince and Princess of Wales and their children. To the strains of the National Anthem, the Royal Party proceeded through the magnificent assemblage to the Conference Room. Looking at it from all points of view, this reception could not be surpassed by any other similar function in the world.

NEVER, perhaps, has the anniversary of the Queen's birthday been celebrated with more brilliancy. There seemed to be a general desire to take a holiday, and larger numbers of loyal subjects than usual were thus enabled to be present at various festivities given in honour of the occasion. For the nonce, the Royalities were the hardest worked, and the Prince and Princess of Wales and their sons and daughters, and the Duke of Cambridge were from early morning to midnight almost continuously on the move from one function to another.

THE display of jewellery at Lady Wimborne's ball was splendid, some of the smartest of the smart folk being present. At midnight the ballroom, illuminated by the electric light, presented a brilliant scene, and the only regret was that there was quite a dearth of dancing men. As the floor was in fine condition, and the music good, this was an especial pity; still the function went off very well indeed. Lady Dudley looked charming in white, and wore a large diamond tiara and pendant of huge sapphires and diamonds.

## STATISTICS.

UP to the present time the Canadian Government has given forty million acres of land to railroad companies.

IN Switzerland ten per cent. of the income from liquor licenses is expended in unfolding to the people the bad effects of alcohol.

THERE are 1,400 dust-women in England and Wales who spend their lives in raking over dust-heaps for what gain they may find. And they like the work.

ABOUT a million worth of gold is used annually in the shape of gold for gilding, lettering, edging of books, sign and ornamental painting and dentistry, gilding taking the greatest share. A cubic inch can be beaten out so as to cover thirty-five hundred square feet, and twenty double eagles could be drawn out in a wire that would girdle the globe.

## GEMS.

TRUE glory consists in so living as to make the world happier and better for our living.

HE that accuses all mankind of corruption ought to remember that he is sure to convict only one.

WEIGH not so much what men assert as what they prove; remembering that truth is simple and naked, and needs not invention to apparel her comeliness.

NATURE when she plants a vegetable poison, generally provides an antidote; so in the moral world, she causes sympathies to spring up by the side of antipathies.

THE man who gives his life for a principle has done more for his kind than he who discovers a new metal or names a new gas, for the great motors of the race are moral, not intellectual, and their force lies ready to the use of the poorest and weakest of us all.

## HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

HINGHAM PUDDING.—One cup of treacle, two-thirds of a cup of butter or suet, one cup of water, three cups of flour, one cup of raisins and currants, one teaspoonful of soda; steam three hours; serve with sauce.

STEWED LOBSTER.—Open two medium lobsters, and cut the meat in small pieces; boil in pint of milk; add to it two tablespoonfuls of melted butter, two tablespoonfuls of flour, mixed smooth in half a cup of milk, one-half a teaspoonful of salt, one-half a teaspoonful of cayenne, a tablespoonful of chopped celery; let all simmer ten minutes, and add the lobster meat, but do not allow the mixture to boil after all is added. Serve as soon as the meat is thoroughly heated. Too much cooking makes the lobster unpalatable.

WOOLLEN GARMENTS IN SUMMER.—It is not easy to make people understand the reasonableness of properly made woollen undergarments for summer wear. It is not easy to make them believe that such garments are cooler than even those of linen or cotton. It is difficult to make any considerable number of people believe that woollen garments, no matter how skillfully and carefully made, can be worn next the skin without positive discomfort in the shape of irritation, excessive heat and numerous other terrors which oppress those who are wedded to linen or cotton underwear. Our workmen, athletes, tennis players, yachtsmen, bicyclists and others whose summer pursuits require the coolest clothing, wear flannel, not cotton or linen, and they wear flannel because experience has taught them that it is not only cooler than any other material, but also, and this is perhaps the most important point, the wearer is much less likely to take cold after excessive exercise and when the garments are damp with perspiration.

## MISCELLANEOUS.

THE license law of Sweden forbids any person buying drink without purchasing something to eat at the same time.

THE cheerful are the busy. When trouble comes knocking at your door, or rings the bell, he or she will generally retire if you send word that you are engaged.

A HOMEY DEVICE.—Mail carriers in Morocco are said to avoid risk of losing their places by oversleeping by tying a string to one foot and setting the end of it on fire before they go to sleep. The string, they know from experience, will burn so long, and when the fire reaches their foot it is time for them to get up.

ELECTRICITY.—According to a German scientific journal, they are using electricity in India to prevent snakes going into dwellings. Before all the doors and around the house two wires are laid, isolated from one another and connected with an induction apparatus. When the snake attempts to enter the house or go under it he completes the circuit as he crawls over the two wires, and if the shock he gets doesn't kill him it is likely to frighten him so that he goes away from there as soon as he can.

CRUSHED BY HARD SENSE.—A so-called brilliant talker is apt to say many things for effect; they sound well, but will not bear analysis. He very likely cannot tell what he does think till his thoughts are exposed to the air, and it is the bright fallacies and impulsive rash ventures in conversation that are often most fruitful to talker and listeners. The talk is always tame if no one dares anything. I have seen the most promising paradox come to grief by a simple "Do you think so?" Nobody, I sometimes think, should be held accountable for anything said in private conversation, the vivacity of which is in a tentative play about the subject. To be asked to explain or give reasons for an impulsive assertion or opinion is almost as disconcerting as being called to explain a joke.

CARRIER BEES.—Some recent experiments have proved that bees fly faster than carrier pigeons. This being the case, the future must witness the supplanting of carrier pigeons by carrier bees. The latter have much to recommend them for this purpose. A carrier bee will be hard to hit. A marksman that would bring down a pigeon would utterly fail to hit a bee. There is nothing in a pigeon's tail to inspire the respect of a foe. There is in a bee's. The rude hand of the trifier that would try to stop the carrier bee in his errand would be withdrawn suddenly—and rubbed vehemently. With the aid of micro-photography, the carrying of long messages by a bee would be a matter presenting no obstacles. A column of reading matter could be fastened to its thighs and a long dispatch affixed to one of its feet. Clearly the bee has an important place to fill in the wars of the future.

A GAME OF RHYMES.—Most young people enjoy so-called "thinking games." One of these originated with a merry party kept indoors by the rain. One of the number suggested the making of couplets in rhyme relating to some historical personage. Each in turn undertook to compose the necessary rhyme or enigmatical sentence, and the company generally had to supply the particulars required for the solution. Here are two simple examples: "The monarch of the wood sheltered the monarch of the land," and

"When the monk his inkstand hurled,  
Upside down he turned the world."

Once started the fun was fast and furious, and geographical conundrums, and punning on the names of places, of which, however, the punster might be required to give some account, being presently introduced, fill up the time remaining before bed so pleasantly that all agreed a very happy evening had been spent. Perhaps others may take a hint.

## NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

—O—

M. G. W.—If the acknowledgment took the form of an I.O.U., it did not require to be stamped.

G. W. C.—We see no impropriety in the person referred to going to the place named, provided it is not a common resort at any time. 2. A week or ten days. 3. Your penmanship is fair.

B. S.—The wild horses of America are believed to have descended from the Spanish barbs, brought over by the early explorers. The Moors of Barbary introduced them into Spain. They are generally larger than the Arabian horses, rarely being less than sixteen hands high.

C. L. R.—The words—

"Worse than a poignard in the basest hand,  
It stabs at once the morals of a land,"

are Cowper's, and refer to the improper use of the pen, than which there is no more powerful weapon in the world, for "the pen is mightier than the sword."

W. N.—The Norddeutscher Lloyd steamship *Lahn* was built at Glasgow. She is 465 feet long, 40 feet broad, and 36 feet deep. She is of 6,500 tons burden, and 10,000 horse-power. She can accommodate 221 first-class, 106 second-class, and about 700 third-class passengers. The officers and crew number 170.

L. E. W.—A quotation may be long or short. It is not limited to a certain number of lines. A whole passage from some author may be quoted. We quote chapters and verses from the Bible by way of authority or illustration, and quote from books of prose and poetry to give an idea of their merits or demerits, as the case may be.

GEORGE.—To make Scotch cake, take one and a-half pounds of flour, one pound of sugar, one pound of butter, one teaspoonful of cinnamon, and one gill of milk. Put the flour, butter, sugar, and cinnamon together; after which, add the milk. Knead well, roll into thin sheets, cut with a round tin cutter, and bake in a moderate oven until a light brown.

M. S. G.—White and black are not, strictly speaking, colours themselves, but are, as the representatives of light and darkness, simply the modifiers of colours, in reducing them and the hues arising from them, by their thinning and neutralising effects, to tints and shades respectively. When a thing reflects all the colours it looks white, and when it absorbs all the colours, it appears black.

O. W. F.—Try the following method of cleaning the said engraving: Lay it, face downward, in a perfectly clean vessel, sufficiently large to allow the engraving to lie flat; pour clean boiling water upon it, and allow it to stand until the water is cold. Take it out carefully, and remove as much of the moisture as possible with blotting-paper. Then place the engraving in a press, or under heavy weights, between sheets of white paper. If very much soiled, the above operation must be repeated.

MINNIE.—As said to other correspondents from time to time, the name of William Banting has been associated with a particular method for reducing corpulency on account of a pamphlet which he published in 1863, which method consists in the use of certain foods and the rejection of other kinds. He especially proscribes the use of bread, pastry, potatoes, butter, milk, beer, port wine, champagne, pork, herrings, eels, salmon, and the like; and recommends lean meat, poultry, game, fruit, dry toast, good claret, dry sherry, madeira, and green vegetables, permitting the moderate use of soft-boiled eggs and of cheese. In brief, his system consists in abstinence from all farinaceous, saccharine, or oily matter, which, he says, is converted into fat. In his first dietary he allowed the use of all vegetables except potatoes, but he afterwards rejected parsnips, beets, turnips, and carrots.

CITY BELL.—1. Preserve your hands from unnecessary soil, and exposure to the sun and wind; wash them in warm water, and, when soap is used, be sure that it is of the very best quality, and totally devoid of lye or other corrosive agents. 2. The engagement-ring may be a diamond or other stone setting; the wedding-ring is in all cases a plain gold one. 3. No gentleman will write a letter to his lady-love accusing her of any shortcomings that have come to him through the tongues of gossips. It would be well to drop the acquaintances of one who would so far forget his manhood. 4. The principal wedding anniversaries are: First year, paper; fifth year, wooden; tenth year, tin; fifteenth year, crystal; twentieth year, china; twenty-fifth year, silver; fiftieth year, golden; seventy-fifth year, diamond. 5. The lady should be the first to bow to a gentleman friend on the street, except in the case of intimate friends, when this rule is not strictly followed.

HENRY F. P.—1. There are many sizes of books. A common-sized school-reader is known as a 12mo, or, as it is called in Latin, a duodecimo; the next larger size is 8vo, or octavo; and then follows 4to, or quarto, and folio. The next smaller size is 12mo, then 18mo, 32mo, and 36mo. When these names were given to books, they were used to signify the number of leaves into which the sheet of printing-paper was folded in making the book. For instance, a sheet folded once, so as to make two leaves, was called a folio; folded twice, making four leaves, a quarto; and folded three times, eight leaves, an octavo. At the present time, these terms mean rather the size of the page than the number of folds in the sheet. 2. Bathe your eyes in luke-warm water, in which has been placed a small amount of salt—not enough to cause a stinging sensation when applied to the eyelids. Desist from reading by gas or lamplight until all evidence of soreness or overstraining has entirely disappeared.

BECKIE LINDLEY.—Use a stiff hair-brush three or four times daily, and in a short time the hair will become glossy and soft. Brush it each time until the scalp becomes red and a warm glow is produced. This is one of the best remedies known.

DUDE.—1. The application of alcohol to the face is recommended by some authorities for the removal of black-heads. It will do the skin no harm if used in moderation. 2. Penmanship shows room for improvement in the formation of the letters.

LOLU.—A person who would act in such a disgraceful manner is no fit associate for a sweet, winsome girl, as one is constrained to think you are. The offence is unpardonable, and therefore nothing remains but to give him the cold shoulder at once, and allow him to sink to his proper level.

MINNIE A. W.—Take plenty of exercise, eat nourishing food, bathe frequently, and live very regularly. This regime will bring the colour to your cheeks without resorting to artificial means. Fresh air is nature's own invigorator, and, combined with regularity in life, soon adds the blush of the rose to pale cheeks.

PEARL LEONARD.—A girl fourteen years old has no business to be deeply in love. The truth of the matter is that the love is only imaginary, and the quicker you disabuse your mind of such sentimental nonsense the better. Wait for five years at least, when you will be more fitted to contemplate courtship and matrimony.

## FEEDING THE BIRDS.

Feeding the birds, and with gentle words

Luring them down from the trees—

Feeding the birds on a winter day,

Brushing the snow from the sill away,

Braving the frosty breeze.

Thus I saw her when first we met,

Thus I fancy I see her yet.

Robin and wren came down to her then

From the coping and bush and wall.

They found the crumbs that lay on the place

Where she, to feed them, had cleared a space;

Nor were they afraid at all.

Too low and sweet was the voice I heard

To frighten even a timorous bird.

Melted at last was the snow, and past

Was the shadow of winter's wing;

But a love was born when the crumbs were thrown

To the hungry birds. It had stronger grown,

And was told in the early spring.

Never a word did my darling speak—

Answer enough was her blushing cheek.

Feeding a bird in a cage, I heard

Its mistress a story tell

To her feathered friend of how, long ago,

She had fed his kind in the drifting snow,

And captured a heart as well.

But never a word did the tale impart

Of the price she paid for the captured heart.

The day is fled, and the birds are fed,

And the night is falling fast.

I see on my true wife's head, bowed down,

Grey locks, instead of the glossy brown

That were there in the glorious past;

But her heart is as fresh and warm, I know,

As it was that day in the drifting snow.

F. L.

OLD SUBSCRIBER.—1. A beautiful ink, writing pale at first, but turning intensely black in a short time, is made by putting 4 ounces of well-bruised Aleppo galls in a quart of clean, soft water, in a well-stoppered bottle, and allowing the mixture to remain for ten days, or even longer, with frequent shaking. Then add 1½ ounces of gum arabic (dissolved in a wineglassful of water) and ½ ounce of lump sugar. Mix well, and afterwards add 1½ ounces of green copperas, crushed small. Shake occasionally for two or three days, and then pour off into another bottle for use. Although it is best to let it stand for two or three weeks. This will doubtless suit your purpose, as it does not corrode steel pens as quickly as ink made according to other recipes, and is also devoid of the gumminess found in what are known as "brilliant" inks.

JENNIE.—It is not surprising that your crew laboured under such a mistake; because the French Academy, and all the learned men of Paris, once did the same. When Dr. Franklin was American Ambassador at the court of France, this identical question was being discussed by the philosophers of Paris. It was then and there stated that if a dead fish were put into a jar of water, the water would be heavier, and the weight of the jar would be increased by the exact weight of the fish; but that, if a live one were put in, the weight of the jar would remain unchanged; and the French philosophers were busily engaged in trying to account for this marvellous phenomenon; and many were their ingenious theories respecting the matter. At last they asked Dr. Franklin to account for it; whereupon that practical old philosopher said, "Let us first see whether there be any such phenomenon before we try to account for it." And, sending for two jars of water, and a dead fish and a live one, he had the fish and the jars weighed; and then, putting the dead fish in one jar, and the live fish in the other, he had them weighed over again; when, to the great amusement of some of the philosophers, and the great chagrin of others, it was found that the weight of each jar was increased by the exact weight of the fish, whether dead or alive. And, if you will try the experiment, you can confound your crew, just as the wise old doctor confounded the French philosophers.

M. N.—1. To make ink powder, take one pound of nut-galls, seven ounces of copperas, and seven ounces of gum-arabic. Pulverise and mix. This amount of ink powder will make one gallon of good black ink. Two or three powdered cloves should be mixed with each pound of powder to prevent moulding. 2. No recipe of practical value for other colours.

GRACIE.—Choose for yourself between the two young men, but at the same time it would be well to find out whether there is not a good foundation for your mother's dislike for the light-haired one. It does not seem likely that she would be so decided in her condemnation of him had she not good reason for it. The look sent us is of a bright auburn, which might be called red by envious-minded persons.

DOIS asks us to tell her the meaning of the different kinds of kisses—namely, on the hand, the cheek, the forehead, and the lips. A kiss on the hand is a sign of respect; on the cheek, affection; on the forehead, veneration; and on the lips, love. Some bright genius has happily said: "We kiss our daughters on the forehead, our sisters and cousins on the cheek, and our lovers and wives on the lips."

FRED.—Solitude is dangerous to reason, without being favourable to virtue. Pleasures of some sort are as necessary to the intellectual as to the corporeal health; and those who discard the innocent and elevating recreations of refined society will be apt, in too many cases, to fall a sacrifice to the gratification of debasing appetites, because the soliloquies of senses are always at hand. That rigid old moralist, Dr. Johnson, says,—"The solitary individual is certainly luxurious, probably superstitious, and possibly mad;" and, although we cannot fully agree with the doctor, yet we think he was at least in the track of the truth.

J. M.—To make cottage or hop beer, take one peck of good sweet wheat bran, and put it into ten gallons of water, with at least three handfuls of the best hops. Boil the whole together in an iron, brass, or copper kettle, until the bran and hops sink to the bottom. Then strain it through a hair sieve, or a thin sheet, into a cooler, and when it is about lukewarm add two quarts of molasses. As soon as the molasses is melted, pour the whole into a ten-gallon cask with two table-spoonsful of yeast. When the fermentation has subsided, bung up the cask, and in four or five days the beer will be fit for use. For the trade, the proportions given must of course be correspondingly increased.

C. A. B.—The Baphomet, or Baffomet, is a mysterious symbol used among Knights Templar. The word was believed to be a corruption of Mahomet, to whose faith the Templars were accused of inclining. According to more recent views, as stated, it has reference to Gnostic mysteries, and was connected with the Gnostic baptism, or baptism of fire. Some of these symbols were found in 1818 in the Imperial Museum of Vienna, and were described by Van Hammer. They are of stone, and represent a female figure with two male faces, inscribed with a serpent, a truncated cross, or Egyptian key of life and death, the sun and moon, a chess-board, a candlestick with seven branches, and numerous Arabic inscriptions.

WILL.—1. We suggest that you consult an oculist. The cause of the trouble of which you complain can only be accurately ascertained by a careful examination of the eyes. It may be that relief can be readily afforded. 2. Fragrance may be imparted to tobacco by mixing with it, while slightly damp, a little cascarilla, either in very fine shreds or recently powdered. Cigars may be perfumed by moistening them externally with the concentrated tincture of cascarilla, or tincture of benzoin or storax, or a mixture of them; or a minute portion of the powders, shred roots, or woods, may be done up with the bundle of leaves that form the centre of the cigar. The so-called anti-cholestatic and disinfecting cigars are scented with camphor, cascarilla, and benzoin.

BON.—1. A female canary will mate with the following birds: the linnet, goldfinch, bullfinch, siskin, bobolink, indigo-bird, and other birds of a similar size. The male from these birds is very highly prized on account of his beauty and song. 2. Goldfinches have been known to live confined in birdcages for sixteen or twenty years, and to be lively and active throughout their imprisonment. They are subject to epilepsy, and sometimes have swollen eyes, which ailments can be cured by anointing the eyes with fresh butter. They are very fond of rape and canary seed, and also enjoy a few crushed hemp-seeds. They are greedy eaters, and care should be taken that they do not eat too much. In their wild state their food, it is stated, consists of all kinds of seeds. 3. Goldfinches are very docile, and can be taught a number of entertaining little tricks.

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